













ENGLISH APOLOGETIC THEOLOGY

*Containing the substance of the Donnellan Lectures  
preached before the University of Dublin, 1903-4*

# ENGLISH APOLOGETIC THEOLOGY

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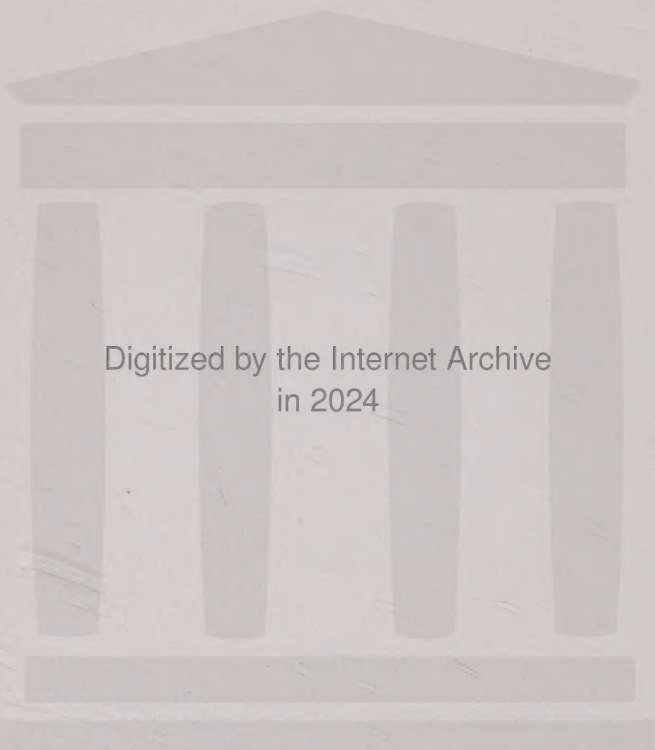
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## PREFACE

THE first six of the lectures contained in this book were delivered in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, as the Donnellan Lectures for 1903-1904, and are now printed with scarcely any even verbal alterations.

The remaining three deal with the various stages of the Socinian and Unitarian Controversies, and have been added as a supplement.

An objection has been raised against the method followed in the second lecture on the ground that it is almost wholly taken up with the consideration of the writings of Bishop Butler, while other phases of the Deistic Controversy have been cursorily passed over and neglected. An attempt has been made to supply this omission in the

Appendix, in which a brief account is given of some of the Philosophical defences of Christianity put forward in that period by some of Butler's contemporaries, special reference being made to the Idealistic Philosophy of Bishop Berkeley.

The last lecture in the series discusses that much controverted question in recent Theology, "The Virgin Birth of our Lord".



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## LECTURE I.

### INTRODUCTORY

Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe, which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old (St. Matthew xiii. 52).

THE words of our text occur near the conclusion of that chapter in St. Matthew's gospel which contains the earliest of our Lord's Parables, those relating to the kingdom of God, and in that position form a striking comment upon the method of instruction employed by our Lord on that occasion. The truths which He sought to impress on the minds of His hearers, while marking an advance beyond the teaching of His predecessors, were in the main anticipated by the Old Testament Prophets, and may have been familiar enough to His audience. On the other hand they were now placed in such a new setting, shadowed forth by such an unexpected method of illustration, and clothed in such a new form, that they possessed all the charm of novelty, and acted as a stimulus to fresh and wholesome thought, upon intellects for whom the old common-place enunciation of



familiar truths would have at most had but a languid interest.

The words of Christ then in the first place convey a general lesson to the Christian teacher. There are still, as of old, the same great facts to be appealed to as witnesses to our religion, the same great truths are still the foundations of our Faith, the same great lessons of life and conduct have still to be inculcated in each age. But while all this is true, it is still our duty to try and present Christianity to each generation of men, as a fresh and living force, adapted to their special needs, and suited to the varied circumstances and environment of different phases of civilisation and social progress. Again and again has it been found that old truths had but to be re-stated in a new form, or placed in a new light, to become invested with a fresh meaning and application, and to be endued with living force and sanctifying power. Christianity has we may be sure its own special lesson for each of the centuries, but in order to make it clear we may need to view it from a fresh standpoint, or to re-adjust the proportion in which we hold the Faith.

But while so much is true of all Christian teachers, all that has been said applies with double force to the Christian apologist. There are no

doubt some grand lines of defence which must never be given up, some strongholds which he must never wholly abandon. And yet the lines of defence which may be occupied by the apologist for Revealed Religion, admit in their nature of a much greater variety, than do the various statements of Christian truth. As our Faith discovers new points of contact and sympathy with successive systems of philosophy in the course of its history, or as new positions have to be taken up by its supporters to meet fresh assaults from some unexpected quarter, or of a nature different from those which it has already encountered, the argument for Christianity must be considerably modified, and the forms which it may assume will differ to a considerable extent. It is then incumbent on us to endeavour to present that argument in the form most acceptable to the age in which we live, and it will be a matter of no small satisfaction to us to note how broad is the basis upon which our religion is built, how many are the lines of defence which she can oppose to the assaults of her opponents, and above all how powerful are the cumulative evidences, differing widely in the sources from which they are derived, and the nature of the proof which they offer, which successive ages of

Christian thought have erected as buttresses to our most Holy Faith.

As a whole I think it may be fairly asserted that the Christian Church has not been unmindful of her duty in this respect, and it will be my object in this present course of lectures to endeavour to show, that our own branch of the Catholic Church has not been deficient in this particular sphere of Christian Apologetics. But before we enter upon what will be our proper subject, I propose to take a brief survey of the course taken by the Church as a whole, as represented by her principal leaders of philosophic thought, at some of the most critical periods of her history. Our sketch of these epochs must necessarily be hasty and imperfect, but even so it may be a useful study, and may serve to allay the forebodings which have been induced in some of our minds, by the recent advances of scientific and critical thought, and the consequent abandonment by the Christian apologist of old and fondly cherished lines of argument, and methods of defence. We may at least learn that it is nothing new for us to have to face such a crisis, and that our Faith has already engaged in and emerged unscathed from contests, not less serious than that by which she is at present assailed.



Among the many vicissitudes which Christianity has experienced in its history, perhaps the greatest was its transference from a Judæan to a Hellenistic soil, and the substitution of Alexandria for Jerusalem as the centre of its intellectual and spiritual life. Its first disciples and earliest teachers were men possessed with the sense of a Divine mission, and animated by a keen feeling of the supreme necessity for righteousness as revealed in Christ, but their horizon was narrow and limited by their Jewish training and prejudices. They did not ask for a philosophical foundation on which to rest a Faith, which was to them more a matter of feeling and intuition than of intellect, and they were the less disposed to endeavour to reconcile those beliefs which they held with any of the forms of thought with which they might be brought in contact, since they seem for the most part to have anticipated a speedy return of Christ to judge the world, so that they did not deem it necessary to secure for Christianity a permanent basis from which it might influence the thought of successive generations. At Alexandria the new religion found itself amidst very different surroundings. There various forms of thought, Roman Stoicism, Oriental Theosophy, Greek Neo-Platonism,

successively aspired to rule the empire of the human intellect, or at times were found fused together in the crucible of some cosmopolitan eclectic system. There too all those great questions in the contemplation of which the human mind has found its highest efforts of thought were the subjects of every-day discussion, and such profound mysteries as the relation of God to the universe, the method of creation, and the origin of evil, were matters to the solution of which each school of philosophy endeavoured to contribute its modicum of thought. One great truth they had indeed succeeded in getting hold of and proclaiming to the world, but it was one most alien to Jewish views of the universe and methods of thought, and one which has only recently received due recognition from modern religious thought, the great truth of "the Immanence of God".

We would have *a priori* anticipated that Christianity would have found such a soil an uncongenial one in which to live and expand, or at all events its only hope of success would have seemed to lie in the contrast between its simple yet sublime moral code, and the too often abstruse and barren metaphysical atmosphere by which it was surrounded. Nothing would have seemed less likely

than that it should have found points of contact with systems which seemed so alien to its whole nature and genius, or that while borrowing some of their terms and distinctions, it should infuse a fresh life and meaning into the dead forms and metaphysical abstractions of a decadent civilisation, give them a permanent place, and invest them with a lasting significance for ages yet to come. That this was what actually happened is well known to every student of early Church history. The Apostle St. John, whose life seems to have been providentially prolonged for this very purpose, found himself in his old age in the Greek city of Ephesus, in the midst of a community which exhibited on a small scale many of those intellectual peculiarities, which we have already noticed as reaching their full development, in the following age in the city of Alexandria. Anxious to present religion to those among whom he lived in a form which would be easily understood by them, he sought for some term or idea common to the world in which he had been brought up, and that in which he now laboured, and he found it in that word common to Jewish rabbi, and Greek philosopher, the "Logos". The conception of the Logos or Divine Reason was one which was long familiar to Greek thought,

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and had among Jewish expositors taken the place occupied at an earlier date by the Divine Wisdom in the Proverbs, but it would exceed our present limits to discuss the history of the term, which no doubt conveyed to some minds a more materialistic, to others a more spiritual, idea; but it does not seem that even when used in the highest and purest sense, as by the Jew Philo of Alexandria, it was more than an influence or essence, it still lacked the attribute of personality. Not such however was the *λογος* of St. John: By Him were all things created. He was the Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, nay, more, the Logos or Divine Word had become Incarnate in the Person of Christ Jesus, and men had beheld His Glory, the Glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

And so the Word had breath and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds  
In loveliness of perfect deeds  
More strong than all poetic thought.

The recognition of this great truth gave at once a philosophical basis to the Christian Faith. Creation bore upon it the impress of the Divine Reason, and was a revelation to man of the Divine Wisdom. The voice which spoke to man in his inmost

heart and conscience came direct from God, and light from above was given to every soul. Here too was to be found a point of mediation between the very different conceptions of the relation of God to the universe, Jewish deism, and the pantheism of the later Greek philosophy. The great truth which each contributed to religious thought was now to become a portion of the heritage of Christendom, and the doctrine of the Divine Personality was to be reconciled with and united to that of the Immanence of God. In the idea too of the Logos, as guiding and superintending the progress of humanity, was to be found the germ of a true philosophy of history.

No doubt a devout and enlightened pagan might have risen to some such lofty conception of the nature of God and the course of history, but Christianity gave a sure seal and stable foundation to all such vague aspirations, when it taught that the Logos had become incarnate in the person of Christ Jesus. The first result of such a philosophy was to place Christianity in relation with all preceding religions and systems of thought. The great Christian Platonists of Alexandria could look with a favourable eye upon the Divine dispensation of paganism. Teachers like Socrates



or Plato were under the guidance of the Logos though they knew it not; the truth had been revealed to them in fragments, but the weakness of their clouded, partial, human reason hindered them from perceiving it more clearly. They had, however, appropriated some one portion of the truth, and some another, but in the Incarnation alone had a clear and perfect revelation been given to men. Hence Christianity, no matter what adumbrations of some of its doctrines might be found elsewhere, was a unique revelation, differing, not merely in degree, but in kind, from all other religions by reason of the supreme truth of the Incarnation, for by it the various scattered rays of light which had hitherto illumined the path of humanity had been gathered together into one central focus; the dim twilight of philosophy and paganism had given way before the rising beams of the Divine Sun of Righteousness and Truth.

We are accustomed to associate Alexandrian Christianity chiefly with such names as Clement and Origen, and are perhaps sometimes inclined to contrast their broad and comprehensive theology with the dogmatic conciliar definitions of the following age. And yet we should remember that

Athanasius too came from Alexandria, and that the great truths, for which he contended in the fourth century, were substantially the same as those which his predecessors taught in the third. The Arian controversy was not as we may have imagined a mere quibble or question of words, but involved in its issue such far-reaching consequences as the doctrine of the Divine Immanence, or the unique supremacy of the Christian revelation. The system of Arius was really founded on pagan conceptions, it tended to polytheism, and by introducing a being not wholly Divine to act as a mediator between God and man, it would have resulted in a system of deism, which would have banished God from all active agency in the universe, and have reduced Christianity from being a revelation of the Divine Life, to the position of a message communicated to men about heavenly things by a divinely commissioned messenger.

Perhaps it might not here be inappropriate to quote on this subject the words of the greatest English philosopher, and the greatest English man of letters of the last age. "The tendency of Arianism," said Professor Green, "was in one respect just the reverse of gnosticism. It was not the moral but the metaphysical side of Christian

thought which it lowered, and we owe it to the firm front opposed by orthodox dogma that Christian dogma is still a thing of the present : one need not be an orthodox trinitarian to see that if Arianism had had its way, the theology of Christianity would have become of a kind in which no philosopher who had outgrown the demonism of ancient systems could for a moment acquiesce." Again, Mr. Froude writes of Thomas Carlyle : " He made one remark which is worth recording. In earlier years he had spoken contemptuously of the Athanasian controversy—of the Christian world torn in pieces over a diphthong : and he would ring the changes in broad Annandale on the Homoousion and the Homoiousion. He now told me that he perceived Christianity itself to have been at stake. If the Arians had won, it would have dwindled away to a legend." Assuredly in such a controversy the Christian Church was fully justified in expressing an old truth in a new form, and like the prudent householder brought forth from her treasure things old and new.

The early centuries of Christian history are an interesting subject of study from a philosophical standpoint, but those which immediately succeeded them were of a very different kind. In the

early Middle Ages the Church produced successful missionaries, and great statesmen and rulers, but there was a remarkable dearth of great theologians. This was indeed only what we should expect from the circumstances of the time. The old civilisation was fast disappearing before the assaults of barbarous tribes, and when the Church sought to convert these new races, she found it necessary to appeal to their imagination and feelings rather than to their reason. On their behalf she devised a gorgeous ritual, and dazzled their minds by her stupendous claims to universal empire. But at the same time she was forced to make concessions to their prejudices and superstitions, and we may notice a distinct retrogression in the theology of the Latin Church from this epoch. The great truth of the Divine Immanence, the precious truth of the Alexandrian Fathers was lost sight of; dogma, under the influence of the system of Roman law, hardened and stiffened, and the conception of a Divine Ruler of the universe was substituted for that of God the Father.

The thirteenth century was in many respects a turning-point in European history. It saw the feudal system and the papal power reach their greatest height of supremacy, it witnessed, too,

the first step in the decline of both. Then too the human intellect began to awake from its long sleep, and to busy itself about questions which had hitherto been left to authority or tradition to decide. The influence of the East had already made itself felt through the crusades, and now indirectly it permeated Southern Europe through the Moorish conquest of Spain, which henceforth became the home of a Jewish and Mohammedan philosophy, which soon blossomed forth in the daring pantheism of Averroes and Avicenna, while the neighbouring countries, especially France, were over-run with many strange heretical sects, which had already imbibed the most dangerous rationalistic principles. The Church endeavoured to stem the rising torrent of infidelity through the influence of the newly founded preaching orders of the Franciscan and Dominican Friars, and was relentless in using the civil power to enforce her persecuting decrees against heresy, but it was felt that something more must be done to meet the intellectual assault upon the Faith, and the Christian defences were on this occasion strengthened by the use of a new and most unlooked-for alliance.

As we have seen, Christianity came in contact with Greek philosophy at an early stage of its



history, and seemed to find many affinities in the lofty spiritual thought of Plato and of those who styled themselves his followers. On the other hand the severely logical empirical teaching of Aristotle was viewed with suspicion and disfavour as tending to rationalism, nor was this suspicion made less, when the pantheistic systems by which Christendom was now confronted openly professed to base themselves on the philosophy of the Stagyrte. That philosophy had long been ignored by Christian teachers, it was now put under a ban and proscribed. But this did not last long. It was felt that the rationalising movement must be met with its own weapons, and, moreover, it was believed that a thorough study of the works of the great Greek philosopher would show that he was not really responsible for the later developments which professed to be based on his system. Moreover Christianity possessed one great safeguard against pantheism, unknown to the Jew or the Mohammedan, the belief in the Incarnation. The result may be summed up in the following criticism on the work of the greatest of the schoolmen, St. Thomas Aquinàs :<sup>1</sup> " That great thinker

<sup>1</sup> Wilfrid Ward, *William George Ward and the Catholic Revival*, p. 276.

had had the chief share in working a far-reaching change in the relations between Catholic and non-Catholic thought. He was the chief representative of that school which, deserting the old patristic antagonism to Aristotle, and the policy of holding aloof from the rationalism of the day, addressed itself to the task of showing how the peripatetic philosophy could be reconciled with Christianity, and to dealing closely and candidly with such non-Christian thinkers as the Arabians, Averroes and Avicenna, and the Jew, Maimonides. From the last named St. Thomas learned much which he has incorporated in his great philosophical work. Indeed the amount which both St. Thomas and Albertus Magnus owe to this great Jewish thinker is a remarkable fact to which German writers have recently called attention." The above remarks might almost equally be applied to other names of that period, Plato and Aristotle both had their followers among the great schoolmen, but the star of the latter was in the ascendant, and the bulwarks of the Faith were strengthened by a host of great thinkers, who despite much that is weak and mere verbiage in their systems, yet seem to have anticipated much of the highest truth which modern philosophy contains.

The intellectual activity of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was succeeded by a period of stagnation in the fifteenth, but it was of short duration, and the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the rise of a new philosophy followed one another in quick succession. Theology now began to excite a more general interest in the world at large, but in the sixteenth, and still more in the seventeenth century, it centred chiefly round the great controversy to which the Reformation gave rise, and other more important and far-reaching questions concerning the fundamental truths of Christianity were too much ignored, and its champions did not sufficiently endeavour to place it in relation to the new world of thought and action which was now rising throughout Europe. They relied too much on the great external sources of authority, the Bible and the Church, for support, and then, too, with Grotius began the long line of writers on the external evidences of Christianity, which long afterwards found its most eminent English representative in the person of Paley. There is but one exception to all this, yet the brilliant but unfinished *Pensées* of Pascal deserves more than a passing mention.

The greatest and most marked result of the

Reformation was the prominence which it gave to the subjective side of religion. It emphasised the individual moral responsibility of man, and even tended to substitute anthropology for theology, and to base religion on the constitution and spiritual needs of human nature. It too, in what was on the continent, especially in France, its most influential form, Calvinism, laid great stress on the facts of sin and human depravity. No doubt it was a one-sided conception, yet like all such views, though incomplete, it contained even if it distorted a great truth. It certainly took a low view of human nature, but so too did the philosophy which was fast coming into vogue, and which was popularised by such a sceptical cynic as Montaigne. Obviously such a theology as, say, the Alexandrian Platonic Christianity would have been powerless in such an age, when men scoffed at its first premises, and recognised in humanity, not the temple of the Logos, but the seat and synagogue of sin and Satan. It was not merely the Reformed Churches that gave a prominent place to such ideas, they found some of their ablest exponents among the French Jansenists of the seventeenth century, and the foremost name among the Jansenists was that of Blaise Pascal.

Dr. Allen in his able work on *The Continuity*

of *Christian Thought*<sup>1</sup> has taken Pascal as the highest representative of Calvinistic thought. Undoubtedly the dark side of human nature, its weakness and failure, entered largely into his system and coloured his view of life, but it is surely unjust for the writer I have just named to tax him with complete scepticism and morbid pessimism. If Pascal felt keenly the darkness and misery by which we are encompassed, and which enter so terribly into our lot, no man was more sensible of the true greatness and dignity of man, of his lofty aspirations, of his infinite possibilities. If the theology of Alexandria looked back to Plato, if that of the schoolmen found a basis in Aristotle, no less was the system of Pascal an attempt to explain that strange contradiction in human nature, which gave rise in the ancient world to the rival sects of the Stoics, and the Epicureans, and which justified at once the lofty views of Epictetus, and the low cynicism of Montaigne. It is this strange anomaly in humanity which has given rise to that conflict in our nature so vividly described by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, and which in our own day lies at the root of those widely differing ethical theories, which still contend with each

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 312-314 for his view of Pascal.

other in their attempts to find the true basis of human conduct. Certainly the following eloquent passage seems to completely clear Pascal from the aspersions which have frequently been cast upon him for under-estimating the dignity of human nature. "The possession of the earth would not add to my greatness. As to space the universe encloses and absorbs me as a mere point, but by thought I embrace it. . . . Man is but a reed, the feeblest of created things—but one possessing thought (*un roseau pensant*). It needs not that the universe should arm itself to crush him. A breath, a drop of water, suffices for his destruction. But were the whole universe to rise against him, man is yet greater than the universe, since man knows that he dies. He knows the universe prevails against him. The universe knows nothing of its power."

We have said that Pascal saw in Christianity the solution of the strange enigma of human nature, the key which fitted all its wards. This thought is finely expressed in a passage which is quoted for the purpose of exhibiting his philosophy of religion by Mr. Tulloch in his excellent little monograph upon Pascal.

"Without divine knowledge,"<sup>1</sup> he says, "what

<sup>1</sup>Tulloch's *Pascal*, pp., 198, 199.



have men been able to do save to exalt themselves in the consciousness of their original greatness, or abase themselves in the view of their present weakness? Unable to see the whole truth, they have never attained to perfect virtue. One class considering nature as incorrupt, another as irreparable, they have been alternately the victims of pride or sensuality—the two sources of all vice. . . . If, in one case, they recognised man's excellence, they ignored his corruption; and so, in escaping indulgence, they lost themselves in pride. In the other case, in acknowledging his weakness they ignored his dignity, and while escaping vanity, plunged into despair. Hence the diverse sects of Stoics and Epicureans, of Dogmatists and Academicians, etc. The Christian religion alone can reconcile these discrepancies, and cure both evils, not by expelling the one by the other, according to the wisdom of this world, but by expelling both the one and the other by the simplicity of the Gospel. For it teaches the just that while it elevates them even to be partakers of the divine nature, they still carry with them in this lofty state the source of all their corruption, making them during life subjects of error, misery, death, and sin. At the same time it proclaims to the

most impious that they are capable of becoming partakers of a Redeemer's grace. By thus warning those whom it justifies, and consoling those whom it condemns, it tempers with just measure fear and hope, through the twofold capacity in all of grace and sin; so that it abases infinitely more than reason, yet without producing despair, and exalts infinitely more than natural pride, yet without puffing up, plainly showing that it alone is exempt from all error and wrong, and possesses the power at once of instructing and correcting men. Who then, can withhold his belief in this revelation, or refuse to adore its celestial light? For is it not more clear than day that we feel in ourselves the ineffable traces of divine excellence? And it is equally clear that we experience every hour the effects of our fall and ruin. What, then, comes to us from all this chaos and wild confusion, in a voice of irresistible conviction, but the irrefragable truth of both those sides of humanity."

We saw in considering the theology of the Alexandrian Fathers, that Christianity seemed to them to reconcile the various views of God, and His relation to the universe, which they found in the different schools of philosophy, and they were thus enabled to find points of contact between their creed

and the systems of thought by which they were surrounded, and upon which they could look with a certain degree of sympathy. We now find Pascal doing for the Christian view of human nature what earlier thinkers had done for the Christian conception of God. The diverse sects of the ancient world had each succeeded in getting hold of a portion of the truth, which, however, they held to the neglect of other equally important aspects of human nature. Hence their theories were not so much false as deficient. In the Christian revelation we can see it as a whole, its contradictions are reconciled, its anomalies explained. This view of revealed religion, as the summing up and reconciling of the various conflicting systems of human thought, is one which has exercised a deep fascination upon such modern thinkers as Coleridge, and Maurice, and Neander. I may add that it is wholly unlike the temper either of scepticism, or of Calvinism.

There are other points of affinity between Pascal and the writers whom I have just named, such as the attempt common to both to find in the spiritual nature of man a basis for the intuition of religious truth transcending the merely logical intellect. It is worth observing too, that Pascal's strength lay

in his philosophy. Even for the age in which he lived his discussion of the particular evidences of Christianity was neither able nor convincing. But in his own department he stands alone among all the men of his time. A Grotius might display to the world the external evidences for a revelation, a Bossuet, with unrivalled eloquence, paint the majesty and Divine glory of the one true Church existing as a witness for God through all the changing panorama of human history, but the foundation of Pascal's faith was deeper and more enduring than that of any external court of appeal however lofty, for it rested upon the constitution of human nature as found in every age and every clime. We may then justly regard the *Pensées* as a defence of the Christian faith, upon the new subjective basis opened by Protestantism, by the greatest Roman Catholic thinker of the seventeenth century, and as a fresh demonstration of the permanence of Divine truth, as exhibited in its power of bringing forth out of its treasure things old and new.

We have now taken a survey, necessarily brief and imperfect, of the relation of Christianity to contemporary thought, and of the methods by which it adapted itself to its intellectual surroundings at

three of the most important epochs in history, its first contact with Greek philosophy, the age of the schoolmen, and the Reformation. To pursue the subject any further would be to enter into a discussion of the whole intellectual and rationalistic movement in Europe during the last two centuries. To endeavour a survey of this vast panorama would of course be impossible in our present course, and we must now limit our vision to one aspect of this great subject, namely, the Apologetic Theology, which our own country, and chiefly our own Church, has produced during the above-mentioned period.

Even this last-named subject is a very extensive one, for if English theology is somewhat deficient in great works of systematic Divinity, it is on the other hand exceptionally rich in numerous apologetic works of great value. Indeed the writers upon this subject include among their number many of the greatest names, both in our philosophy, and general literature.

There is one fact which will I think go a long way towards explaining the high place occupied by English works on speculative Divinity and Christian evidences, namely, the comparative freedom for a long time enjoyed by the English people, and

especially by the members of the English Church, in all questions affecting religion. Even in the eighteenth century the State very rarely made use of its power against even the most notorious infidel writers, and then only in the case of flagrant indecency, and in more recent times it has practically conceded complete religious liberty to all its subjects. It is not necessary in discussing religious matters to make an unreal distinction between philosophical and theological truth, or to profess to receive upon authority what our reason refuses to accept. And what is true in this respect of our country as a whole, is in a double measure true of the Church to which we belong. It is, as Alexander Knox long ago remarked, the most good-natured Church in the world. Nowhere has more room been afforded to different schools of thought, or more freedom to individual speculation, and no branch of the Christian Church has shown itself more willing to accept and to assimilate new truths of philosophy, or fresh discoveries in science or in criticism.

The history then of English apologetics is one full of interest and variety. No two succeeding centuries could have had less in common than the eighteenth century, and that which followed it. We ourselves have in many respects more sym-



pathy with, and resemblance to, men of an earlier epoch, than to those of two centuries ago. "For between this age and the last . . . a great gulf is fixed. It is almost impossible, without special study, to throw oneself into communion with the age of the first two Georges, to feel as though its men and women were of real flesh and blood, and not mere marionettes, whom an adroit hand is putting through fictitious bows and imaginary minuets. In the moral history of the world the last century is not of necessity a hundred years nearer us than its predecessor."<sup>1</sup> This is certainly the case with regard to its religious controversies. The greatest of them, the deistic, has now for us only a historical interest. Even Burke, more than one hundred years ago, could say of the leading writers of that school who created such a sensation in their day: "At present they repose in lasting oblivion. Who, born within the last forty years, has read one word of Collins and Toland and Tindal, and Chubb and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves Freethinkers? Who now reads Bolingbroke? Who ever read him through? Ask the booksellers of London what is become of these lights of the world?"

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Green, *Oxford Studies*, p. 27.

It must in justice be acknowledged, that the works of the principal opponents of the deists have shared the same fate as a rule. Even the case of Bishop Butler is scarcely an exception, for it is a commonplace, that his line of argument is not suited to the controversies of the present day. Even the writings of the last great theologian of the century, Paley, have lost much of their force, and become blunted with the course of time. For the philosophy of the nineteenth century, and its view of the relation of God to the universe, and to man in particular, differed *in toto* from that which immediately preceded it. We may remark that it scarcely differed less, in its political and social aspirations, or in its ethical conceptions. A basis had scarcely been found for the Faith against the first assaults of modern infidelity ere it had to be considerably modified to meet the requirements of a new age. But as before Christian truth and Christian apologists were found quite equal to the occasion, and I for one cannot doubt that they succeeded in fixing religion on a much firmer basis, and infusing into it a loftier and nobler spirit, than it had before possessed.

What we have now said will indicate the method which will be followed in treating our subject. As

we have seen it falls into two great divisions, the theology of the eighteenth and that of the nineteenth centuries, but each of these may again be considered under two subdivisions. The earlier part of the eighteenth century was occupied with the question of the probability of a Divine revelation, and particularly of the truth of such a revelation as Christianity professed to be, apart from the particular evidence by which it was supported. The subject was discussed from a philosophical standpoint, and the controversy was adorned with the names of many great thinkers, although it may be more convenient, and profitable for us, to confine ourselves chiefly to a view of the works and influence of the greatest of them, Bishop Butler.

The period which immediately succeeded was of a different kind. For reasons which we will afterwards consider, the philosophic defence of Christianity was now exchanged for the discussion of Christian evidences, especially that of miracles. As a whole, it was a less interesting controversy and has fewer great names to record, yet it exhibits much acute thought, and found a brilliant representative in Paley, whose writings are now as much under-estimated, as they were once over-appreciated.

It was not until the close of the third decade in the nineteenth century that the influences of the new age, romanticism in literature and transcendentalism in philosophy, began to affect our theology, and then their influence was chiefly perceptible in the writings of a great lay-theologian, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Among his followers the ablest were Frederick Denison Maurice, and his brilliant and popular disciple, Charles Kingsley. Fifty years ago they were the foremost influence in theology, and wielded an immense power in the domain of the higher religious thought of this country.

But it was not long ere new subjects began to engross men's minds. Darwin's *Origin of Species* appeared in 1859, *Essays and Reviews* in 1860, and these were speedily followed by Bishop Colenso's work on the Pentateuch, and a new epoch began whose interests were chiefly scientific and critical, and whose watchwords were Evolution and Development; an epoch of which we have not yet seen the close. Having devoted a lecture to the consideration of each of these successive schools of Christian thought, we may in conclusion sum up the results of our investigation, and consider the variety of the Christian argument, and the marvellous adaptability of the Christian Revelation, when

viewed from the different standpoints which will be presented to us.

But our treatment of the subject will show us also the unity of Divine Revelation, and the harmony which exists between the various manifestations of Himself which God has been pleased to vouchsafe to us—that in Nature, that in Christianity, and that in the conscience and spiritual nature of man. For the Christian philosophy of the eighteenth century and especially that of Bishop Butler, was an attempt to show the analogy which exists between the first two of these against the denial of that resemblance by the deist, while Coleridge and his disciples, in a later age, and from a higher religious level, sought to exhibit the harmony between the last two. Finally the problem of our own age, one as yet only very partially solved, is the attempt to demonstrate, through the new view of the working of God's providence revealed to us by modern science, that, in spite of the many appearances to the contrary, the God revealed to us in Nature is that Perfect Being, to whose existence our hearts and consciences alike bear witness, and that the world in which we live is in the last resort governed by the rule of perfect Wisdom, inspired by the power of perfect Love.

Lastly, we will have the cumulative evidences of Christianity exhibited to us in a historical form. It may be true, that our attitude towards those evidences has altered much in the last century. It may not now be possible for us to have the truth of our faith demonstrated by a "smart syllogism" but perhaps it is not even desirable. Yet as we study the proofs of our religion in all their breadth and fulness, more and more will the conviction be forced upon us that we have not believed in vain. It is not alone on the evidence for miracles, or the fulfilment of prophecy, that we base our Faith. More subtle, yet not less convincing, arguments have been gradually accumulated by the Christian apologists. The analogy of Nature, the response of our hearts and consciences, the unique character of the Founder of our religion, the unapproachable sublimity yet simplicity of His teaching, the existence of the Catholic Church throughout the world, the influence of our religion alike on the individuals and the societies which have received it, these and many more such considerations testify to the truth of our most Holy Faith, and unite in declaring as if with one voice of the supreme object of that Faith, that of a truth "He is the Son of God".



## LECTURE II.

### BISHOP BUTLER AND THE DEISTIC CONTROVERSY

For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Romans i. 20).

THE sudden rise of deism, and the influence which it exerted upon English thought and religion in the early years of the eighteenth century, were new and unexpected phenomena. The great struggle between the Church and Puritanism had hitherto seemed almost wholly to absorb men's interests, and to have left little room for so different a line of thought and inquiry, as that which now became the main subject of controversy. We can indeed well imagine how, under the later Stuarts, the reaction against a hard and narrow fanaticism would have given rise to an unrestrained scepticism, or a total indifference in matters of religion, which at first only finding vent in the case of a few individual writers or thinkers, nevertheless already possessed a latent force, which made itself manifest under the more tolerant rule which succeeded the Revolution of 1688. Perhaps we may also re-

cognise in it, to some extent, the result of that bold freedom of inquiry and revolt against authority which had frequently, and not least in Puritan England, characterised the Protestant Reformation. More probably we should be justified in seeking its basis in that empirical sensational philosophy, the foe to faith and mysticism, which reigned supreme in the century which we are now considering, and of which Locke, though himself a convinced and devout believer in Christianity, may be regarded as the chief exponent. Yet even a recognition of all these influences would scarcely prepare us to anticipate so great a transition, as that from the Puritan England of the seventeenth, to the deistic England of the eighteenth century.

The limits of the deistical controversy proper in England have been defined pretty strictly by Mr. Mark Pattison in his essay on the "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England". "Stillingfleet," he says, "who died Bishop of Worcester in the last year (1699) of the seventeenth century, marks the transition from the old to the new argument. In the six folios of Stillingfleet's works may be found the echoes of the Romanist controversy, and the first declaration of war against Locke. The deistical controversy attained its greatest

intensity in the twenties (1720-1740), after the subsidence of the Bangorian controversy, which for a time had diverted attention to itself, and it gradually died out towards the middle of the century."<sup>1</sup> And as we have already seen before that century had closed Burke could speak of the writings, and almost of the names of the leading deistical writers as having been quite consigned to oblivion.

We might thus be inclined to regard the controversy as a local one with a merely historical interest, yet in another sense it forms an important landmark in the progress of thought. To it as a source we may trace the later developments of modern rationalism, of which it formed the starting-point. Voltaire was a disciple of Bolingbroke, and introduced the ideas which he had imbibed from his master into France, where they found a much more favourable soil for their growth, and in the writings of Rousseau, and the *Encyclopædia*, they became one of the most formidable of the weapons which were employed for the destruction of the old order and the *ancien régime*. There too scepticism had not to contend against a powerful intellectual championship of orthodoxy as in our own country, and the

<sup>1</sup> *Essays and Reviews*, pp. 320, 321.

strange contrast in this respect between the two countries, and the two Churches, is at once striking and suggestive. But it was not merely French thought and French history that was profoundly influenced by English deism. Toland, one of the earliest writers of this school, found patronesses and sympathisers in German princesses, the Electress of Hanover and the Queen of Prussia; and his writings, and those of his successors seem to have excited considerable interest in that country. It was, however, chiefly through the indirect influence of Voltaire, the favourite and master of Frederick the Great, that deistical notions found a home in Germany. Here, however, they came in contact with philosophical and critical ideas of a new kind, and underwent a great transformation in the hands of Lessing, Herder and the German illuminism. It is unnecessary for us to examine their history any further, but it would be interesting to trace the development and modifications of deism, in the various systems of subsequent rationalism, and through the influence of successive systems of philosophy, until at length, after the lapse of a century, it was re-introduced into England from Germany, armed with more dangerous weapons, and destined to be a far more

dangerous enemy to Christianity, than it ever had been in the epoch which we are now considering.

It would not be possible nor, if it were, would it be desirable for us to sketch within our narrow limits the history of the controversy. It has been already related at considerable length by Sir Leslie Stephen, in his *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, and an abridgment of his account which could be little else than a summary of names and dates would be of small service. Two only of the sceptical writers of that age have succeeded in securing for themselves a permanent place in our literature, but neither Hume nor Gibbon from the nature of their rationalism, or the exact time at which their principal works appeared, can be classed among the leaders of the deistic movement. Their influence was undoubtedly great and I hope to be able to refer to it in my next lecture. Of the writers who fall more strictly within our period the chief was probably Tindal, the author of the once famous *Christianity as Old as Creation*. Other important names were those of Toland and Collins, while Woolston and Chubb stood on a decidedly lower plane. The name of Bolingbroke should not be forgotten, nor in discussing the question of miracles

can we pass over the name of one, who though not a representative of either party, occupied a prominent position in the controversy—Middleton.

The positions which were held in common by most of these writers would now probably be held by very few without some reserve. They were firm believers in the existence and sufficiency of natural religion. God had given to all men sufficient light to enable them to recognise His existence, and to discern their duty towards Him. There were certain fundamental moral and religious truths which seemed to be common to all religions, and a part of the common stock of human belief. These truths had, however, in all the great religions been overlaid with myth and fable, and disfigured with superstitious additions. Christianity in particular might be regarded in many of its leading statements as a republication of this religion of Nature, but it too was weakened by having mixed with it doctrines, which seemed to be at variance with reason and the light of Nature, and which were supported by highly improbable miracles, imperfectly attested. Christian theology too seemed to limit the religious dealings of God with the world to the confines of one small nation, and to ignore the claims of that revelation of



God in Nature, which rested on a broader basis, and seemed of more universal validity, than any merely written revelation among one particular people could ever claim to be. The Christian apologist in his reply generally admitted a good many of his opponents' contentions. He fully recognised the claims of natural religion, spent much care in elaborating its proofs, and accepted it as the basis on which to rest his own system. There were, however, he argued, some important points upon which the light afforded by Nature was not sufficiently clear, and a revelation was necessary in order to supplement this deficiency. This was especially the case with regard to the great hope of mankind, the belief in a future life. Whatever sanction reason might give to this belief it spoke in a hesitating voice, and unless it were firmly held, and connected with the notion of rewards and punishments beyond the grave, it could be of little service to morality. It was just this need which revelation supplied. Christianity might be a republication of natural religion, but it invested it with fresh sanctions, and threw a new light on one of its darkest mysteries. As for the more difficult or profound mysteries of the Faith, apologists of this school ignored them, or else

strove to explain them away, and tried to make Arianism a point of union between the orthodoxy of the creeds and the socinianism of the deist. Typical representatives of this class of thinkers were Locke, to whom we have already referred, and his brilliant disciple Samuel Clarke.

A writer of a different kind was the learned and forcible, if at times somewhat coarse, Warburton, who labours through the six huge volumes of his unfinished work *The Divine Legation of Moses*, to prove his famous paradox, that a belief in a future life was necessary to the welfare of society and the existence of the State, and that since Moses omitted it from his teaching and legislation he must have relied upon the manifest interposition of a Divine Providence to secure the observance of his enactments. On a higher plane of thought we meet with that great religious champion, our own Bishop Berkeley. There are some who think that his *Idealistic Philosophy* has still a great part to play in the future development of theology, and that we may hope one day to see his name coupled with that of Bishop Butler, among the foremost of the great philosophic defenders of revelation. But we must not pause at the mention of names, even though they may be those of the greatest scholars,

philosophers or literary men of their day who nobly aided in the defence of the common faith, but must hasten on to consider somewhat more in detail the writings of the man who was at once the greatest and most representative thinker of his day upon religious questions—Bishop Butler. Perhaps no writer who has left us so little has so profoundly influenced the higher world of religious thought. It is scarcely necessary for me to remind you that his writings are contained in two small volumes, and are practically comprised in his Sermons delivered at the Rolls, and the *Analogy of Religion*. It is of course upon the latter that his fame chiefly rests, but the sermons came first in order of time and may be regarded as introductory to the larger work, so we will first proceed to consider them with the preliminary observation, that in the end they will probably be found to be the most enduring foundation for his reputation as a philosopher and thinker, for in them he seems to have laid the basis on which is erected much that is best and most characteristic in the theology of to-day.

It has been pointed out<sup>1</sup> that in the eighteenth century, while the cosmological, the teleological, and the ontological arguments on behalf

<sup>1</sup> By Sir Leslie Stephen.

of theism were quite familiar and frequently employed, the moral argument seems to have been entirely ignored by English writers. On the other hand in more recent discussions of the subject it has assumed a very prominent, if not the foremost place. We may take as examples of this the treatment of the theistic problem by our two greatest modern theologians, Dr. Martineau and Dr. Newman, who though differing widely in their religious position are quite at one on this point. Thus the former tells us that "Volition is in its nature at the disposal of character: and the character of God—the order of affections in Him—the ends that are highest in regard—we learn, not from the tides, the strata or the stars, but from the intimations of conscience, and the distribution of authority in the hierarchy of our impulses. The perfection which is our ideal is but His real; the image of Him thrown upon the sensitive retina of the soul by His own essential light."<sup>1</sup> Dr. Newman urges the same argument with still more frequency and power, especially in the *Grammar of Assent*. "Conscience is," he says, "our great internal teacher of religion. Conscience is a personal guide, and I must use it because I use my-

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. iii., p. 180.

self. Conscience is nearer to me than any other means of knowledge. Conscience too teaches us not only that God is, but what He is.”<sup>1</sup>

It would be easy to multiply examples in illustration of this tendency, but we need only point out that it is distinctively modern, and stress has been laid upon the fact that it synchronises with the rise of the Catholic reaction in Europe, and the High Church movement in England. But even though we admit this coincidence and acknowledge that the leaders of those movements gave a new meaning and force to the argument from conscience, it certainly can not be claimed that it originated with them. Whence then did they derive it? Was it from Kant? This may have been the case with continental thinkers, but in England it was different. It was from Butler that Martineau, as he confesses, drew his ethical system, and he follows his master very closely. The same is true of Newman, whose University Sermons were preached when Kantian influences and German philosophy were scarcely known in England. It was from Butler too that Chalmers, the philosopher of Scotch Presbyterianism, and Channing, the greatest of American religious

<sup>1</sup> *Grammar of Assent*, pp. 389, 390.

teachers, the saint of Unitarianism, drew their inspiration.

The placing of the authority of conscience upon a sure basis, as the rightful Lord of human nature is the great legacy of Butler to mankind. This he has done in his Sermons preached at the Rolls, in which, says Sir James Mackintosh,<sup>1</sup> "he has taught truths more capable of being exactly distinguished from the doctrines of his predecessors, more satisfactorily established by him, more comprehensively applied to particulars, more rationally connected with each other, and therefore more worthy of the name of discovery, than any with which we are acquainted; if we ought not, with some hesitation, to except the first steps of the Grecian philosophers towards a theory of morals".

In order to understand how this was the case we should remember that the popular philosophy at that time in England was the system of Hobbes, which resolved all human motives into the principle of self-love, and made selfishness the root of all action. The theology too of that age was still profoundly influenced by the Calvinistic conception of human nature, which sufficiently accounts for the absence of any religious system

<sup>1</sup> *Ethical Philosophy*, p. 145.



based upon a recognition of the higher spiritual element in man, or of that Divine Image in which he was created. It is true that a protest had already been made both in philosophy and theology against the predominant schools, but no really able systematic attempt had as yet been made to form a juster estimate of the position and powers of human nature. But now Butler came forward as the great champion of human nature against both Calvinism and the selfish-philosophy, and vindicated its claims by a profound and searching analysis, the result of which may be briefly stated. He succeeded in separating the principle of self-love from the private self-regarding appetites and passions, whose existence it pre-supposed and whose objects were different. He also distinguished a number of social affections at the head of which stood benevolence. But he assigns the highest place in the hierarchy of human nature to neither self-love nor benevolence, for both alike are subject to the supreme sway of conscience. It occupies a unique position, for it is not to be considered as one of the faculties of human nature entering into rivalry with the others, but rather as standing above and apart from them, and exercising over them that undisputed and absolute sway

which the word "ought," which peculiarly belongs to its dictates, expresses as its peculiar prerogative. "Had it," says Butler, "strength as it has right, it would govern the world."

Much of Butler's analysis is directed against the system of Hobbes. He makes indeed several concessions to it and does justice to the truth which it contains, but is the uncompromising foe of its main position. It is somewhat strange that for a long time the Roll sermons seem to have been but little known, and not to have exerted much influence, while Paley and his school maintained hedonistic theories both in philosophy and religion. But a higher tone has since that time pervaded ethical speculations, and the peculiar form of the theory which Butler combated has now practically ceased to exist. A new school has, however, come into prominence in later days, which has made benevolence the main factor in human action, and given to it the same position which self-love held in the theory of Hobbes. It makes "the greatest happiness of the greatest number," to be the true object of human conduct. In ethics it has resulted in the theory of utilitarianism, while in theology it has issued in a form which has been called theophilanthropism. Though apparently starting from

the opposite pole to the hedonist theory, it bears a strong resemblance to it in many ways, and is equally opposed to that view which makes conscience the supreme arbiter of human conduct.

Still it is surely unfair to find fault with Butler for not having anticipated and answered the objections of the utilitarians; he naturally spent most of his strength in combating the errors which were most prevalent in his own day. However, as I hope to point out at greater length, in this respect the great Christian philosopher of the following century, Coleridge, completed the work of his predecessor, and vindicated the claim of conscience to supremacy against the attacks of its later opponents.

There is another point too in which the work of the later philosopher supplements a defect in the system of Butler, for while he so strongly maintains the existence and supremacy of conscience, he returns no satisfactory answers to the questions, What is its nature? On what sanction does its authority rest? The very defective theological conceptions of the day, in which no doubt Butler shared to some extent, may perhaps account for this omission. The deistic view of the transcendence of God, which completely separated Him

from both man and the universe, was then almost universally held, and even though Butler may at times have risen to some conception of the great truth of the Divine Immanence, he was careful generally, as he tells us, when arguing with opponents, as far as possible to do so on the general principles which were then usually held. It was reserved for a later age and a higher philosophy to proclaim, that conscience was not merely the highest of man's natural faculties, but that through its presence in him man was lifted above the sphere of nature, and brought into contact with the Divine Spirit, that by it he was a sharer in that "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world". It is also noticeable that Butler seems never to have directly stated the moral argument for theism, and does not refer to it in the *Analogy* when summing up the evidence for this fundamental belief, though he does reason from man's moral nature, if not to the existence, at least to the character and nature of the Supreme Being. In this view of the religious function of conscience he has been to a great extent followed by disciples like Chalmers, whose theology had a leaning towards the deistic conception of God. But enough of censure. It was not given to one

man to erect the stately edifice of our modern theology. Butler laid its foundation deep in the moral nature and necessities of man, and however it may have required to be modified to meet the assaults of the utilitarian, or needed fresh buttresses to withstand the attack of the evolutionist, conscience still remains "the essential principle and sanction of religion in the mind."<sup>1</sup>

It is now time for us to direct our attention to the work on which Butler's fame chiefly rests, and of which the full title is *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*. And at the outset I must confess that in this work he seems to me to argue from a lower standpoint than in the Roll Sermons, and it is not always easy to reconcile the doctrine of probability as set forth in the latter, with that of conscience as it is brought forward in the earlier work. In order to understand the method which Butler here adopts we should remember the period at which the book was written, and the class of persons to whom it was addressed. It was published in the year 1736, towards the close of the deistic controversy, and may be regarded as an *Argumentum ad hominem* to men who held

<sup>1</sup> Newman.

views similar to those which had been expressed by Tindal in his *Christianity as Old as Creation*. We have already seen what these views were. Deists held strongly to the great fundamental truth of the being of God, and proclaimed the existence of a natural religion common to all men, and appealing alike to the intellect and conscience of mankind. Christian apologists, as we have seen, generally admitted the premises of the deist, and strove in many respects to bring revelation into harmony with the teaching of Nature, of which it formed the crown and completion. But Butler saw much deeper than did either the deist, or the average Christian apologist. Instead of trying to explain away or minimise the difficulties found in the Christian revelation, he meets its opponents with the powerful retort, that the very same objections are to be found in their own system of natural religion. We may find the key to the whole of Butler's line of reasoning in the pregnant saying of Origen that "he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from Him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it as are found in the constitution of Nature," to which Butler adds: "That he who denies the



Scripture to have been from God upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by Him". He then states the argument somewhat differently, and makes it lie in the inference that if the system of revelation presents resemblances and analogies to that of Nature, there is at least a probability that they both proceed from the same Author.

The first part of the book deals with the subject of natural religion. It assumes as a postulate the existence of an intelligent Author of Nature, and Natural Governor of the world. Butler was quite justified in making this assumption when arguing against the deists, and he considers it has been abundantly proved from the argument of analogy and final causes ; from abstract reasonings ; from the most ancient tradition and testimony ; and from the general consent of mankind. At the same time there can be no doubt, that this assumption on the part of Butler has done more that anything else to weaken the force of his argument in more recent times. It should, however, be observed that he does not, as Matthew Arnold supposed, postulate the moral character of God. On the contrary, he throws his whole

strength into the endeavour to demonstrate the moral government of the universe.

The first chapter of the *Analogy* deals with the question of a future life. Science has undoubtedly shown that the connection between soul and body is much more intimate than Butler<sup>1</sup> supposed, and has shown how false were some of the physical arguments by which he endeavoured to support his thesis. He reasons that as the loss of a limb does not necessarily affect the thinking power neither need that of the whole body. If for a limb we substitute the head the argument at once falls to the ground.

The greater portion of the first part is occupied with a discussion of the nature and reality of the Divine government of the universe, and of the difficulties presented by the subject. Here our author is on his own ground, and displays in treating his subject from a larger standpoint the same masterly skill which was so conspicuous in the Roll Sermons. We may notice especially such points as the argument for the government of God by rewards and punishments which almost amounts to a demonstration, Butler's theory of

<sup>1</sup> See the note on the Immateriality of the Soul, appended to this chapter, in Dean Bernard's edition of "Butler".

the formation of habits, the chapter on Necessity, and that upon the Government of God considered as a scheme or constitution imperfectly comprehended ; Butler is here seen at his very best as a great moral philosopher, who strove to "justify the ways of God to man" and to help man to read a little more clearly the dark riddle of existence.

It is then in the second part of the *Analogy*, which deals more especially with the subject of revealed religion, that Butler has been accused of acting the part of a special pleader, and of basing his argument on a theological probability. There may be some justice in the accusation, but the force of it will be greatly diminished if we always bear in mind the class of objections which it was intended to answer, and the great object for which the book was written. It was not intended for a demonstration, or in the first place, as the author tells us, for a positive argument at all on behalf of Christianity, and it is certainly very unfair to find fault with Butler as is so often done for not having accomplished that which he did not even profess to attempt. Neither are we to regard it as an *a priori* speculative philosophical defence of revelation. For such speculative attempts Butler had but little respect. Even the argument from analogy

he only uses for a negative purpose to repel attacks, never as so many have done since his time to support theories about the nature of the spiritual world. All he seeks to show is that there is nothing irrational in revelation to one who acknowledges the truth of natural religion, or even the existence of God and His general government of the world, and that all *a priori* objections to it are invalid and absurd, and in this we think he has been quite successful. The objection to which we have referred has been put in a somewhat different form by Dr. Martineau.<sup>1</sup> He contends that we should not expect to find the same difficulties in a revelation as in natural religion, since presumably it is one of the functions of the former to remove some at least of those contained in the latter. Butler seems to have thought it doubtful if we were capable of receiving much light upon those matters in our present condition, and is thought by many to have laid too much stress upon our ignorance of such high subjects. It is certainly true that there was a want in his system. He was more of a moralist than a theologian. Had he paid more attention to the significance of the Incarnation, a doctrine in that age almost

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. iii., p. 123.

ignored by divines, he might have seen that revelation did throw some light upon the mysteries of life, and the general working of God's Providence. Fortunately Butler's omission in this matter has been amply atoned for by the labours of later workers in this department of theology.

Another objection raised by the same critic to the analogical method is, that the difficulties which it is intended to illustrate occupy a much more prominent place in the system of revelation than their analogues do in the system of Nature, and he adduces as examples: "the hereditary curse of sin and ruin; the eternal punishment of helpless incapacity; the conveyance of an alien holiness by imputation, and the transfer of an infinite penalty from an offending race to a saving God".<sup>1</sup> But surely Dr. Martineau is here, as so many of his school do, identifying Calvinism with Christianity, and mistaking the alien excrescences of the former system for a part of the original revelation. Undoubtedly the method of analogy has been misused, though but rarely if ever by its greatest exponent, and in all cases of doubt or difficulty we must no doubt assign to the plain teaching of conscience a higher place than to any merely

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. iii., p. 122.

probable inferences, yet the abuse of a method does not destroy its lawful use, and it is still open to us to use this means at all events of defending the great truths of our religion from cavil and assault. At the same time I desire to heartily join Dr. Martineau in his protest against some conclusions which have been drawn by disciples of the hard Church school, from the use of certain natural analogies. But as has been shown before now it is quite possible to make a very different use of the facts of Nature.<sup>1</sup> Butler the great inductive reasoner who in the sphere of morals had been such an acute student of human nature, in the domain of theology chose to follow the same method in the larger study of the universe. There he might hope to find the key to the meaning of those dogmas about which the schools argued and came to no satisfactory conclusions, for if Nature and revelation had the same author, the facts of the one might be the best illustration of the deeper mysteries of the other. We may take for instance such a doctrine as that of the Atonement which is so fully discussed by Butler. Here undoubtedly we can bring forward the analogy of

<sup>1</sup> See Sir James Stephen's article on "Butler" in *Horæ Sabbaticæ*, vol. ii.



Nature in favour of such a broad general truth as the great principle of mediation. But when we desire to establish some particular theory as to how this mediation was effected, such as that of substitution, or imputation, or the vicarious suffering of infinite physical pain, we lose all assistance from that source. The patient observer of the methods of Nature may find in his study a means of deliverance from those narrow preconceived views of dogma, which spring from stereotyped views of interpretation, or that natural yet often disastrous desire to combine all our knowledge of Divine things, which must necessarily be but partial, into one complete system of science.

I do not know how far this was the case with Butler, but his chapter on mediation and atonement certainly exhibits an advance upon the treatment of the subject by his contemporaries, and has exercised a great influence upon the course of subsequent thought. For the common illustration of the case of a sovereign who had to deal with rebellious subjects, and whose mercy must be tempered with discretion and respect for the majesty of a violated law, an analogy which gave an easy opening for boundless legal subtle-

ties and pedantic technicalities, he substituted the grander and broader picture of the conspicuous position which mediation held in what was admitted to be the general order of Divine Providence, and of God's government of the world. His great endeavour was to maintain the efficacy of the work of Christ, and of the objective fact of the atonement, against those who would deny its power, and at the same time to avoid theories or explanations of the fact which are not based upon the Scriptures, or supported by the analogy of Nature. He has summed up his consideration of the whole subject in a few weighty words, and his conclusion thus stated has been generally accepted and made the text of their dissertations by our best theologians since that period. "Some," he says, "have endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what the Scripture has authorised; others, probably because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away, and confining His office as Redeemer of the world to His instruction, example and government of the Church. Whereas the doctrine of the Gospel appears to be, not only that He taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what He

did and suffered for us: that He obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted unto eternal life: not only that He revealed to sinners, that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it; but, moreover, that He put them into this capacity of salvation, by what He did and suffered for them; put us into a capacity of escaping future punishment, and obtaining future happiness. And it is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit, by performing the conditions, upon which it is offered, on our part, without disputing how it was procured on His.”<sup>1</sup>

The main object of the *Analogy* was to remove *a priori* objections to and prejudices against revelation, so as to leave the mind free to examine dispassionately the evidences which may be brought forward on its behalf. Butler has devoted a chapter to the consideration of these evidences. As so often happens, and as we have observed in the case of Pascal, the great philosopher is not seen to advantage in the discussions of these questions, and in any case the time was not yet ripe nor the knowledge of early history yet sufficient. New forms of a more reverent scepticism, based upon the researches of modern criticism, have since ap-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 197, 198, Bernard's edition with note.

peared, and have rendered invalid many of the arguments of eighteenth-century evidence writers.

Even when discussing the *a priori* objections to the miraculous Butler does not display his usual acumen, and in one place is guilty of confounding the antecedent improbability of any given chain of events happening before their occurrence, with the improbability after the event which has to be faced in the case of miracles.<sup>1</sup> He attempts, too, to explain the moral difficulties of the Old Testament in a manner strangely at variance with his lofty ethics, and his theory with regard to the formation of habits. At the same time there are many suggestive hints to be found in Butler's treatment of Christian evidences, to which later writers are much indebted. Thus he lays stress on the value of circumstantial evidence, and directs particular attention to the cumulative force of the Christian argument, which he states in this manner: "Thus the evidence of Christianity will be a long series of things, reaching, as it seems, from the beginning of the world to the present time, of great variety and compass, taking in both the direct, and also the collateral, proofs; and making up, all

<sup>1</sup> This is very clearly pointed out in Dean Bernard's note on "The Improbability of Miracle," vol. ii., p. 161.

of them together, one argument: the conviction arising from which kind of proof may be compared to what they call 'the effect' in architecture of other works of art; a result from a number of things so and so disposed, and taken into one view."<sup>1</sup> It was his object to present what we may call a moral conviction of the truth of revelation by an appeal to many sources of evidence, which might impress the whole nature of man and not merely his intellect. The modest conclusion at which he arrives is, that there is probable evidence for a historical revelation, and, moreover, he adds that for an inquirer "a mistake on one side may be, in its consequence, much more dangerous than a mistake on the other,"<sup>2</sup> a statement which reminds one painfully of the famous passage about the "wager" in Pascal's *Pensées*.

A few words must be said in conclusion about the influence which Bishop Butler has exerted, and the relation in which he stands to modern thought. No doubt the *Analogy* as against deism was unanswerable, and must have been one of the causes which contributed to its rapid decline as a distinct form of thought. It is quite another question whether it tended directly to restore the old

<sup>1</sup> P. 221.<sup>2</sup> P. 253.

orthodox beliefs, which had been so rudely shaken. For, indeed, we must endorse the remark of Pitt that it was a book which opened as many questions, and raised as many doubts as it solved. No doubt the influence and teaching of Butler, like that of his great contemporary Hume, led men to a deeper questioning with regard to the ultimate ground of religious belief, and while it destroyed the shallow unreal scheme of deism, it may have led some into the deeper abyss of agnostic speculation, and as against this, the most popular as well as the most potent form of modern scepticism, the weapons which Butler employed are weak and ineffectual. At the same time it is not correct to suppose that the form of thought which he so successfully combated has ceased to exist, or that the great argument of the *Analogy* is now antiquated or of no further service. The strength of his argument against the deists no doubt centred in the assumption common to both parties of the existence of a personal God, but probably Sir James Stephens is right in thinking that the not very spiritual sceptics of that day held very loosely to that belief, and so might contrive to evade the force of Butler's logic,<sup>1</sup> but that in the

<sup>1</sup> See his article "Butler," *Horæ Sabbaticæ*, vol. ii.



case of convinced and devout theists, such as Francis Newman or Theodore Parker, his reasoning would be unanswerable. As long as a shallow optimism, or a loose way of thinking upon matters of religion prevail, as long as a Socinian theology, based upon the idea that benevolence is the only attribute which finds a place in the Divine nature, shuts its eyes to the stern realities of life and the sombre side of existence, men will always find a wholesome corrective in the views of the deep and serious, if at times dark and severe thinker, to whom life was full of awful meaning, as the scene of man's probation, and the place where eternal destinies were wrought out by him, through his relation to that true yet stern teacher the inward monitor and delegate of God to man.

Butler may fitly be taken as the representative of the highest religious thought in England in the eighteenth century, because while in keenness of intellect and moral elevation he surpassed all his contemporaries, he yet essentially belonged to that common-sense inductive school of philosophy which then reigned supreme. We are, perhaps, at times inclined to envy him his easy victory over the shallow infidelity of his age, but if his adversaries were weak, how poor were the weapons with which

he had to meet them. If at times his ethics rises into a higher atmosphere, as a whole his thought, both moral and theological, is "cribbed, cabined, and confined," within the narrow limits of an empirical philosophy, and the dreary religion of his age could not supply the inspiration which was absent from its thought. He had to meet his adversaries on their own ground, and meet them on their own terms. "Thus," he says, "I have argued upon the principles of the fatalists, which I do not believe, and have omitted a thing of the utmost importance which I do believe, the moral fitness and unfitness of actions, prior to all will whatever, which I apprehend as certainly to determine the Divine conduct as speculative truth and falsehood necessarily determine the Divine Judgment."<sup>1</sup>

Our study of English Apologetics has rightly begun with Butler, for he is the first great English writer on that subject who is still a real influence with us, and has permanently influenced the course of its subsequent development. "His works," said the late Dean Church, "have had perhaps, directly or indirectly, more to do with the shaping of the strongest religious and moral thought in

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 264, 265.

England, in the generation that is now passing away, than the writing of any one who can be named.”<sup>1</sup> “Bishop Butler,” wrote Mr. Gladstone, “taught me forty-five years ago to suspend my judgment on things I knew I did not understand. Even with his aid I may often have been wrong; without him I think I should never have been right. And Oh! that this age knew the treasure it possesses in him and neglects.”<sup>2</sup> Nor should we, dazzled with other and newer treasures, forget to pay our homage to the memory of the great philosopher, who first taught us to recognise the Divine indwelling in the majesty and authority of conscience, and in Nature herself to behold as it were a sacrament of Divine grace, and a revelation of Divine truths, of spiritual realities, of the nature and essence of God Himself, “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead”.

<sup>1</sup> *Pascal, and Other Sermons*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Mr. James Knowles.

## LECTURE III.

### THE EVIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know (Acts ii. 22).

THE Apologetic Theology of the latter portion of the eighteenth century is distinguished by marked characteristics from that of the period which immediately preceded it. In the first epoch the defenders of the faith worked principally on philosophic grounds, and their reasoning was chiefly of an abstract *a priori* nature, in the latter, the question of the external evidences of Christianity assumed the foremost place. During a long period, extending from the middle of the eighteenth until the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century, theology proper almost ceased to have any existence in England. On the other hand treatise after treatise upon evidences, and especially upon miracles, came forth from the press in rapid succession, and the place of the Butlers and Berkeleys as champions of the faith was now occupied by a

crowd of lesser names, among whom the most representative, as well as the ablest and most brilliant, was undoubtedly that of Paley.

In discussing the causes of the change in the position taken up by the Christian Apologists it is not necessary for us to consider the questions to which side belonged the victory in the preceding contest, which party said the last word, or whether anything yet remained to be said by either party in a controversy of which both sides seemed to be quite weary.

The truth is, other and deeper causes were at work in producing the change to which I have just referred. For nearly half a century both the Christian apologist and his deist opponent had taken for granted certain common assumptions about the character and attributes of God, which formed for them a basis of natural religion, reached by *a priori* speculation, and, indulging in a light and shallow optimism, had averted their eyes from those deeper problems concerning the ultimate foundation of things, which still baffle and perplex the highest efforts of the human reason. The first to sound a deeper note was Butler, and his philosophy cut at the root, not only of the shallow deism of his day, but of much of the *a priori* reasoning

which had been so fashionable with the Christian deists of the preceding generation. But it was not only the defence which was now conducted upon different lines, there was a change too in the character of the assault, and the light skirmishing of the earlier deists was succeeded by the more serious attack of a powerful foe, and revelation encountered its first really dangerous opponent in the sceptical philosophy of Hume. Into its nature and methods we cannot now enter, but one of its results was to unsettle the very foundations of belief by introducing a thorough-going scepticism with regard to the most elementary reasoning processes, and to carry to its extreme limits the empirical philosophical system of Locke. The sceptical philosophy of Hume was soon opposed by the common-sense school of Reid, but it was not until a much later date, and under the influence of a wholly new philosophy, that men dared again to reason upon the deeper mysteries of religion, and in the meantime the influence of Butler and of Hume was paramount among the two opposing schools of religious thought, and both alike were agreed in their hostility to speculative systems, and their desire to limit the province of human speculation.



There is one other influence which must be mentioned as acting in the same direction with those to which we have already referred, that of Edward Gibbon. In the last years of the eighteenth century Christianity had to bear the brunt of a double assault, that of the sceptical philosophy of Hume, and the more covert and insidious, and for that reason the more dangerous, hostility of England's greatest historical writer, the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, who came,

Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer,  
That Lord of Irony, that Master-spell.

In his historical knowledge, and in his power of grasping and marshalling the facts of a past age of course Gibbon stood absolutely alone. Incapable of any true spiritual insight, the spread of Christianity seemed to him explicable from secondary causes of environment and coincidence. His theory was manifestly insufficient, but he first brought the question of the growth and progress of Christianity to the scrutiny of historical criticism, and his influence combined with that of Hume and Bûtlér in removing the question of revelation from the domain of abstract speculation, and bringing it within the sphere of historical evidences.

The latter subject was indeed one which had occupied attention since the time of Grotius, and which opened up a line of argument particularly congenial to the English mind. Accordingly we find that treatises dealing with it were general even in the early days of the deistic controversy beginning with Leslie's once famous *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*. He applies a fourfold test to determine the truth of a revelation. First, that the matter of fact be such as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. Second, that it be done publicly in face of the world. Third, that not only public monuments be kept up in honour of it, but some outward actions to be performed. Fourth, that such monuments and such actions or observances be instituted and do commence from the time the matter of fact was done. In an age when the science of comparative religion was unknown, and when, in the absence of historical criticism, a theory of absolute fraud and imposture formed the only alternative to an implicit belief in the early Christian records, it was easy for Leslie so to apply these tests as to establish the truth of the Christian revelation and the absence of all competitors, and his work long formed the model for succeeding

writers. Two of the deists, Collins and Woolston, led the attack respectively upon the arguments from prophecy and miracles. Among the answers to the former we may note the work of Bishop Chandler on prophecy, and among the defences of the miracles the characteristic work of an age which applied the tests used in a court of law to determine the truth of a revelation, Sherlock's once well-known *Trial of the Witnesses*. We must also in passing notice, though it is not directly connected with our present subject, the attack upon ecclesiastical miracles in Middleton's *Free Inquiry*. It is said that some of the dilemmas raised by this writer in his discussions upon the problems of early Church history, led to the temporary conversion of Gibbon to the Roman Catholic faith.

Undoubtedly, however, the writer who most influenced the course of thought upon the subject of miracles was Hume. Abandoning in this as in other respects the *a priori* position, he does not discuss the question of the possibility but that of the credibility of miracles. That credibility rests upon the value which we assign to testimony. But testimony has been often found to be false, and certainly the probability of its being so in any case is greater than that of the occurrence of a

miracle. For the uninterrupted sequence of the laws of nature is a fact for which we have a testimony, far more ample than we can have for any breach of that continuity. His final conclusion seems to be one of utter scepticism : " It is always more probable that a miracle is false than true ; it can therefore in no case prove anything else, since it is itself incapable of proof ". The objection to miracles as stated by Hume was long the principal one urged by their opponents, and as long as we remain in the sphere of Nature alone it is unanswerable. It is only when viewed from a higher standpoint, from the firm belief in God, and from a consideration of those presuppositions which make a revelation probable, that we can hope to neutralise its power, and to turn the balance of the argument by moral considerations, which far out-weigh all mere intellectual puzzles. It is evident, therefore, that the question of the credibility or possibility of miracles is closely connected with considerations of a larger kind, concerning the existence and nature of God, and the relation in which He stands to the universe, and to man in particular, and that the answer which we give to the former question will depend to a great extent upon our primary religious

conceptions. Unfortunately, however, the epoch which we are now considering was not favourable to such large views, and the apologists who wrote in answer to Hume, of whom Campbell was perhaps the most conspicuous, seem to have had a very imperfect grasp of the whole situation, and frequently lost themselves in subtleties arising out of the doctrine of probability, while they were content for the most part to isolate the question of miracles and consider it by itself. One writer only seems to have approached the subject from the standpoint of a definite theology, although even his conceptions are imperfectly developed, and the works of Paley form the best reply to the scepticism of Hume.

William Paley, Archdeacon of Carlisle, comes last in order of time among the evidence writers of the century, whose labour he inherited and of whom he was the most eminent representative, bearing the same relation to them that Butler does to his predecessors in the earlier philosophical movement. His chief works are the *Moral and Political Philosophy*, the *Natural Theology*, *Horæ Paulinæ*, and the *Evidences of Christianity*. About the earlier members of this quartette a very few words will suffice. The first of them is the

most eminent example of the great mistake made by the Christian defenders of that age. At an earlier period, as we have seen, the selfish theory of morals found its great exponent in the sceptical Hobbes, while Butler was at once the great champion alike of orthodoxy, and of the disinterested theory of ethics. But in the course of the contest the combatants had exchanged weapons. Locke, the founder of the empirical school of philosophy, had written on behalf of revelation, while the orthodoxy of Shaftesbury, the great opponent of Hedonism was not above suspicion. Accordingly the higher school of morals fell into disrepute, and the defenders of religion made an unnatural and unworthy alliance with a moral system of which the foundation was self-interest, and of that unholy alliance Paley was the principal representative, and his *Moral and Political Philosophy* the chief fruit. "Virtue," he defines as "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness." Religion, viewed from his standpoint, was capable of enormously strengthening the inducements to virtue, or the deterrents from vice, held out by the ordinary school of current moralists, from the infinite prospect of happiness or the



reverse, which it disclosed as the result of good or evil doing. Paley's attractive and clear style, and the acute reasoning shown in the work, gave it a great popularity, and it long occupied a high place in the studies of his own university of Cambridge, while the teaching of his greater predecessor Butler seemed to be wholly ignored or forgotten. Thanks to the higher moral and ethical atmosphere introduced by the religious movements of the following century, there has been a great reversal of judgment upon this question; religion has allied itself with a higher school of philosophy, and Paley's moral treatise represents a mode of thought which is now happily almost extinct.

The *Natural Theology* is an able and lucid if not original statement of the argument from design which has always been a favourite one with English divines, and may be placed beside Butler's "Roll Sermons" as exhibiting the teleology of the external world, in addition to that displayed in the marvellous constitution of human nature. It is often supposed that the design argument has received its death-blow from the theory of evolution, and indeed the mechanical deism of Paley has now been supplanted by a higher view of the Divine Immanence, and to say the least

of it his manner of stating the argument would require to be considerably altered. But the argument from design itself has not suffered, whatever it may have gained through the advances of science. Thus Sir William Thomson says: "I feel profoundly convinced that the argument of design has been greatly too much lost sight of in recent zoological speculations. Reactions against the frivolities of teleology, such as are to be found, not rarely, in the notes of the learned commentators on Paley's *Natural Theology*, has, I believe, had a temporary effect of turning attention from the solid irrefragable argument so well put forward in that excellent old book. But overpowering proof of intelligence and benevolent design lies all around us; and if ever perplexities, whether metaphysical or scientific, turn us away from them for a time, they come back upon us with irresistible force, showing to us through Nature the exercise of a free will, and teaching us that all living beings depend upon one ever-acting Creator and Ruler."

The *Horæ Paulinæ* is an attempt to prove the authenticity of St. Paul's epistles by undesigned coincidences, between statements contained in them, and the events narrated in the Acts of the

Apostles. It marks the beginning of a critical movement in English theology, and is by many held to be Paley's ablest work. The subject was no doubt one which gave a great opportunity for the display of his acute and legal intellect. As might be expected he bestows most of his attention upon those earlier epistles the composition of which was contemporaneous with the events related in the historical book, and no doubt it is due to no small extent to his arguments that their authenticity has ever been regarded as more certain, and less open to the assaults of criticism, than any other portion of the New Testament canon.

Our principal concern, however, is with the *Evidences of Christianity*. It would be superfluous for me to attempt a summary of such a well-known book, but it is of very unequal value, so it may be useful briefly to indicate what Paley accomplished, and how much was left to be accomplished through the labours of his successors. First, then, I would direct attention to the preparatory considerations "Of the Antecedent Credibility of Miracles," to which I have already referred as containing Paley's reply to the criticisms of Hume. It is a short chapter and might easily be expanded, more-

over there are lines of argument drawn from the spiritual nature of the Christian faith, such as the character of its founder, and the self-evidencing nature of such doctrines as that of the Incarnation, and its harmony with a miraculous revelation, which seems to have been quite unknown to Paley or his contemporaries. He dwells chiefly like the earlier apologists upon the need of a revelation to disclose the truth of a future life, and the need of such a doctrine to reconcile the apparent injustice of earth with the goodness of God, while miracles seem to be a necessary adjunct of such a revelation. "In a word," he says, "once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not incredible."

The first part of the *Evidences* is devoted mainly to the proof of two propositions: (1) that there is satisfactory evidence that many professing to be original witnesses of the Christian miracles, passed their lives in labours, dangers, and sufferings, voluntarily undergone in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and solely in consequence of their belief of these accounts, and that they also submitted, from the same motives, to new rules of conduct. (2) That there is not satisfactory evidence that persons professing to be original wit-

nesses of other miracles, in their nature as certain as these are, have ever acted in the same manner, in attestation of the accounts which they delivered, and properly in consequence of their belief in those accounts.

Paley threw all his strength into the proof of the first of these propositions. He has successfully demonstrated its truth, and it is the most satisfactory part of his work. Knowing that even then cavils had been raised with regard to the authority of the New Testament documents, he relied largely for support upon the testimony of heathen writers, or upon the statements of broad general facts which were admitted by all, and hence this part of his book is but little affected by modern criticism. He devoted a long chapter to the question of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, but the time was not yet ripe for such a discussion, and Paley, who always relied largely upon the labours of his predecessors, was much indebted for his facts to Lardner's useful work on the *Credibility of the Gospel History*. I do not think that Paley's discussion of the second proposition is by any means as exhaustive or satisfactory. He was himself quite conscious of the difficulty raised by the existence of non-Chris-

tian miracles supported by strong testimony, and examines some of the cases brought forward by Hume. Many of his general remarks upon the subject are both interesting and suggestive, but the study of comparative religion was then unknown, with the exception perhaps of a superficial acquaintance with Mohammedanism. "The question of miracles is no longer," says Max Müller, "as it was in the days of Hume, a mere question of historical evidence. A comparative study of religions has taught us that miracles, instead of being impossible, are really inevitable, that they exist in almost every religion, that they are the natural outcome of what Mr. Gladstone has well called 'imperfect comprehension and imperfect expression.'"<sup>1</sup> There is of course no attempt made by Paley to deal with this aspect of the question.

The second part of the *Evidences* deals with the auxiliary evidences of Christianity, and the third is devoted to a consideration of some objections. As a whole they are inferior to the earlier part of the book into which Paley put his whole strength, and which he evidently considered the most important. This inferiority is especially noticeable in the chapter which deals with the moral and spiritual

<sup>1</sup> *Anthropological Religion*, pp. 13, 14.

evidences, a subject which was not congenial to the tone of Paley's thought, and for the material of which he was largely a debtor to Soame Jenyns' *Internal Evidences of Christianity*. Of the apologetic value of Christian dogma and especially of the incarnation he says nothing, and were not this omission only too much in harmony with the habit and temper of his age, we might be inclined to find in it a proof of that bias in the direction of Arianism of which, whether justly or not, Paley has so often been accused.

It might be well for us now briefly to endeavour to summarise the position of the evidential school, and to see in what relation it stood both to its more philosophical predecessors, and also to later schools of thought. In the first place, then, we may observe, that the two schools of Christian apologists in the eighteenth century seem to follow each other in a logical order, and this is especially true of their two principal representatives. The great object of the *Analogy* was not to establish the positive truth of Christianity, but rather to repel *a priori* objections to the system of revealed religion, and to incline men to pay attention to, and examine without prejudice, the proper proofs which could be brought forward on behalf of that revelation. In



matters of religion the analogical method cannot really bring us much farther than this, and its function is chiefly of this negative description. As was pointed out by Bishop Hampden in his work on "The Philosophical Defence of Christianity" other religious systems, such as Mohammedanism, could employ this method of defence, and indeed no religion could really succeed in finding a home among men, unless it was to some extent at all events in harmony with the system of Nature, and capable of satisfying human needs. What was required in order to give Christianity a position different from all else was some distinguishing token of its supernatural origin, and such a sign seemed to be guaranteed to it by such proofs, as those of miracles, and the fulfilment of prophecy. The first school of apologists had shown that there was nothing manifestly absurd or unnatural in the Christian revelation, it could not off-hand be passed over or pronounced false, on the contrary there was at least a possibility that it might be what it professed to be, a revelation from God. The later school of writers maintained that the truth of revelation was more than a possibility, for it was not a mere philosophy or speculative system which had been handed down to us,

but we inherited an historic faith, the credentials for which were open to examination, and might be proved to be true by the most convincing evidences, by well-authenticated miracles, for which no parallels could be found in history, and by the known accomplishment of predictions, which had displayed a more than human foresight.

The line of defence which we have here briefly indicated was regarded as quite satisfactory a hundred years ago, and during the early years of the last century theologians devoted most of their energies to consolidating and developing the lines of defence laid down by Butler and Paley. This was especially the case with what was called the older school of Oriel divines, who about the period 1820-30, occupied the foremost place in the world of religious intellect. Perhaps the most representative name among that group of thinkers was that of Archbishop Whately, who afterwards held the see of Dublin. As the editor of Coplestone's remains, and as the patron of Blanco White, he was closely connected with the older members of the party to which he belonged, and in later life he was regarded as the leader of a distinct school of thought to which he gave a name. He devoted special attention to the argument from miracles,

and may be regarded as the most illustrious of Paley's disciples. He meets the *a priori* objection to the miraculous, not only by a reference to the work of creation, but considers that man could never have emerged from the savage state without Divine aid and intervention, a view by the way of the early state of man which seems peculiarly modern for that time. Davison, another member of the Oriel group, produced an able and elegant treatise on *Prophecy*, which was long the standard work on the subject. He brought into prominence the moral element which separated it from mere prediction, and traced with great care its gradual development through the various periods of Israelitish history. Davison was probably the ablest and most learned theologian of his day, and although the value of his work has been much lessened through the changed aspect of modern criticism, it may still be consulted with advantage on many points. Other names were those of Hampden whose *Philosophical Defence of Christianity*, occupies the foremost place as a commentary on the *Analogy*, and Hawkins, long Provost of Oriel, who in his Bampton Lectures on the "Cumulative Evidence for Christianity," took up the characteristic position of his school, that a revelation

must be judged to be true or not, solely by its external evidences, without regard to its substance, a statement which drew forth a strong remonstrance from Dr. Arnold of Rugby, whose appearance in Oriel marked the beginning of a new departure in the realm of Christian Apologetics.

In our next lecture I hope to be able to describe some of the leading features of that new movement, which profoundly influenced all departments of religious thought; at present we are chiefly concerned with the history of the evidential school. Inheriting the traditions and too often the prejudices of the eighteenth century, its principal leaders offered a strenuous and not always a discriminating opposition to the advance of new ideas, and to the views especially of the Coleridgean divines, and other teachers who were imbued with the tenets of German transcendentalism. Foremost among them may be mentioned Rogers, the author of *The Eclipse of Faith*, written in reply to Francis Newman's *Phases of Faith*, and Dean Mansel. The latter was one of the principal contributors to the well-known volume *Aids to Faith*, written in 1862 as an answer to *Essays and Reviews*. It exhibits all the usual features of the school from which it emanated, both in its strength

and its defects, but its general line of reasoning shows but little advance upon the arguments of Paley and his contemporaries.

I have already referred to what I consider the principal merit of this school, and we may consider it fortunate that it preceded the more fanciful speculations of recent theologians. It was well that men should be taught that Christianity was not a mere speculation, but that it rested upon a solid historical basis, that it claimed for itself a supernatural origin, and to have come to men as a revelation from above, not to have been evolved from the human intellect. The tendency of such thinkers as Strauss in Germany, Francis Newman in England, and Theodore Parker in America was to dissolve away all real substantial Christianity in a dreamy pantheism, which, while acknowledging in revelation much that was noble and lovely, recognised no authority in religion save that of the individual intellect, and no revelation save that of God within the soul. From such splendid reveries men required to be recalled to reality, they needed some wholesome restraint upon such daring speculations, and such a corrective was to be found in the writings of the historical school, with their strong clear line of

argument, their insistence upon the necessity for external evidences and external authority, and the check which they imposed upon the speculations of an unbridled intellect.

There is, however, another side to the picture. Mr. Hutton has given the name of the "Hard Church" to those followers of Paley, and members of the common-sense school, of whom the chief characteristic is the "habit of resting the main stress of belief on the argument from design, and the miraculous credentials of revelation," and having contrasted its dry and narrow orthodoxy with the liberal views of such broad Churchmen as Mr. Maurice and Dean Stanley, he thus sums up the principal features which mark off its leading champions: They are "latitudinarian, but not Catholic in the tone of their theology,—sharp and confident in their logic,—given to browbeat their adversaries on the spot rather than go with them their mile, or at least up to the utmost point of common conviction,—dry and ungenial towards intellectual doubt,—shrewd partisans, eager assailants of 'extremes,' and champions of that neutral precipitate of Christian theology, orthodoxy in its cooling stage".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Theological Essays*, pp. 338, 339.

There is indeed only too much truth in this description. The sharp but narrow intellects of the hard Church party were quite unable to comprehend the great religious revolution of which they were witnesses, or to distinguish the great truth which gave it strength and beauty, from the extreme presentations of it by which it was too often marred and weakened. For even the pantheism of Theodore Parker bore witness to a noble truth, that of the immanence of God in Nature, while the claim to pass judgment on the contents of a revelation, however exaggerated, was but the natural result of the belief that God had created man in His own image, and that a certain affinity existed between the human and Divine natures. But these Divine and noble doctrines were hidden from the view of hard logical minds to whom religion, divested of all that appealed to the higher reason, the sense of beauty, or the emotions, appeared merely as a series of syllogisms to be grasped by the logical understanding alone, or as a set of dogmas stiffened into rigidity, arid and sterile, having no connection with the life of humanity, satisfying no aspiration, inspiring no enthusiasm. Such minds were certainly unfit to sympathise with the new ideals, encourage or



sustain the lofty hopes, or engage heartily in the projects of a new and more spiritual age.

As a rule the writers of this school were content with elaborate discussions of the historical evidences, but there was one notable exception. Dean Mansel in his Bampton Lectures on the "Limits of Religious Thought" endeavoured to find a philosophical basis for the method of judging a revelation solely by its external evidences, by proving the human intellect incapable of gaining any direct speculative knowledge of religious truth. German philosophy was now beginning to exercise a considerable influence upon the English mind, but in a very different direction to that which we at the present day are most inclined to associate with its teaching. Fifty years ago the teaching of Kant was considered to lead to complete agnosticism. His distinction between the *Phainomena* and the *Noumena*, and his assertion of a subjective incompetence to arrive at any real knowledge of the thing in itself, were the points of his philosophy to which most importance was attached, while the concessions which in this respect he made to the practical reason in the moral sphere were ignored or denied. At a later date a very different view was taken of the drift of the Kantian

system of thought, and as Mr. Illingworth has so well shown in his recent able work on "Reason and Revelation," the two most opposite views, of philosophic nescience, and of absolute knowledge, were both based by their principal exponents upon a development of certain points in Kant's teaching. The first of these, however, was the earliest to find acceptance in England, chiefly through the influence of Sir William Hamilton, and Mansel endeavoured to base his theological system upon Hamilton's philosophy. In the religious world, too, he could claim the support of some great thinkers. A feeling of reverence and humility has always checked devout men from seeking too eagerly to pry into the mysteries of God's providence, and made them quite willing to admit with Bishop Butler, "that, upon supposition of a revelation, it is highly credible beforehand, we should be incompetent judges of it to a great degree: and that it would contain many things appearing to us liable to great objections, in case we judge of it otherwise, than by the analogy of Nature".<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, however, in the case of Butler, as in that of Kant, intellectual scepticism was to a great extent counteracted by certainties reached in

<sup>1</sup> *Analogy*, p. 164.

the realm of conscience and the practical reason. But it was otherwise with Dean Mansel. While admitting the existence of an absolute morality, which is identical with the Divine nature and attributes, he claims that there is also a relative concrete practical morality with which we are chiefly concerned, and while we have been given regulative ideas by which we may direct our conduct, we have no right to make them a basis for speculation, or to assert that they give us any insight into the Being and character of God. Hence we have no reason to object to a revelation because it exhibits the dealings of God as contrary to our sense of justice and right, or contains doctrines repugnant to our moral feelings, for they may be but "temporary suspensions of the laws of obligation," similar to the "corresponding suspension of the laws of natural phenomena which constitute our ordinary conception of a miracle". Dean Mansel indeed in drawing such a sharp line of distinction between Divine and human morality, unsettled the whole basis of moral obligation, while in the sphere of revelation he completely overlooked the fact, that in the Incarnation, God had directly manifested to men the Divine attributes and character in the person

of Christ. It need scarcely be said that the line of argument followed in this reasoning led to a violent controversy. It was opposed by great theologians like Frederick Denison Maurice who had grasped the significance of the great truth of the Incarnation; by moral and ethical thinkers like Mr. Goldwin Smith who based religion on the identity of justice and right as Divine and human attributes; and drew even from the utilitarian John Stuart Mill the passionate protest: "I will call no being good who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures, and if such a being can sentence me to hell for not so calling him, to hell I will go".<sup>1</sup> I think it, however, the less needful to discuss at further length the subject, as it has been accepted by very few in the extreme form in which it was advocated by Dean Mansel, and while we may regard his Bampton Lectures as a much-needed protest against rash *a priori* speculations, they certainly have not found favour in their attempt to destroy the grand doctrine of the Divine origin and nature of our conscience and moral ideas; and the difficulties which Christianity, or more especially the Old Testament narratives present in this realm must

<sup>1</sup> *Exam. of Sir W. Hamilton's Philosophy*, p. 129.

be solved by some other hypothesis than the "dreadful figment of two moralities".

It must indeed be acknowledged that the evidential school does not now occupy the prominent position which it once held. No doubt this is partly due to the changed religious temper of our own age. Men are no longer content to look to the outward accessories and accompaniments of a religion, but press on from the outer courts to the inner shrine which contains its most sacred mysteries, there to discern if possible the proper proofs of its divinity. The cold deistical spirit, which looked for no more in a revelation than a republication of natural religion, has been replaced by a keener spiritual sense, by a more enthusiastic religious spirit, which seeks for and expects that a revelation shall contain some message from God, charged with transcendent power to satisfy the needs, to heal the wounds, and to strengthen the weak and uncertain aspirations of a humanity, which realises its ignorance and sinfulness, but is conscious of capabilities and longings, which only through such a Divine assistance can receive their full development and satisfaction.

But there is another very different cause which has also led men to look for something more, as

needful to supplement the external credentials of religion, I mean the advance of science and critical research. It is perhaps still too soon to pronounce an opinion upon the probable results of such studies as those of comparative religion, or the higher criticism, upon the arguments from miracles and prophecy. We may safely predict that their efficacy will not by any means be destroyed; it seems almost equally certain that it will, to a considerable extent, be impaired. In any case the external evidences of revelation, like the argument from design, will require to be stated anew in a different form, and with regard to both we are passing through a period of reconstruction. In the end either chain of reasoning will at most yield us probable results, which can only be converted into certainties through the action of spiritual faculties, faith, hope, love, finding their full satisfaction, in and drawing their inmost life from the great verities of God, as made known to us in Christianity.

At the same time it is a great mistake to decry, as is so often done in our own day, the value of Christian evidences, or thoughtlessly to depreciate the miraculous witness to our religion. It is not merely that the Christian revelation is in itself one

great miracle, beginning with the Incarnation, and concluding with the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord into Heaven, but even the lesser miracles of His life are important as the fit and harmonious accompaniments of such a revelation, and of the manifestation of such a Person. It is then incorrect either to base the truth of the revelation solely on the evidence of miracles, or the truth of the miracles themselves on the sublimity or self-witnessing power of the doctrines which accompany them, rather should we regard them as supplementing each other in one grand harmonious whole which would lack completeness if either part were wanting. Thus, to use the words of Professor Mozley: "Miracles are the direct credentials of a revelation; the visible supernatural is the appropriate witness of the invisible supernatural—that proof which goes straight to the point, and, a token being wanted of a Divine communication, is that token. We cannot, therefore, dispense with this evidence. The position that this revelation proves the miracles and not the miracles the revelation admits of a good qualified meaning; but taken literally, it is a double offence against the rule that things are properly proved by the proper proof of them; for a supernatural



fact is the proper proof of a supernatural doctrine ; while a supernatural doctrine, on the other hand, is certainly not the proper proof of a supernatural fact.”<sup>1</sup> Or we may say with Archbishop Trench : “The miracles have been spoken of as though they borrowed nothing from the truths which they confirmed, but those truths everything from the miracles by which they were confirmed ; when, indeed, the true relation is one of mutual interdependence, the miracles proving the doctrines, and the doctrines approving the miracles, and both held together for us in a blessed unity, in the person of Him who spake the words and did the works, and through the impress of highest holiness and of absolute truth and goodness, which that person leaves stamped on our souls ; so that it may be more truly said that we believe the miracles for Christ’s sake, than Christ for the miracles’ sake. Neither when we thus affirm that the miracles prove the doctrine, and the doctrine the miracles, are we arguing in a circle : rather we are receiving the sum total of the impression which this divine revelation is intended to make on us, instead of taking an impression only partial and one-sided.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bampton Lectures.    <sup>2</sup> *Notes on the Miracles*, pp. 101, 102.

## LECTURE IV.

### THE INFLUENCE OF COLERIDGE UPON MODERN THEOLOGY

For in Him we live, and move, and have our being (Acts xvii. 28).

THE early years of the nineteenth century were marked by the rise in England, and indeed throughout the greater part of Europe, of an intellectual movement, which at first finding expression in the literature, especially the poetry, of the age, was destined ultimately to influence profoundly the course of religious thought. It would, however, be quite impossible to give anything like an adequate summary, however brief, of the scope and content of that movement in a single lecture. All that we can here attempt is to draw attention to one feature of the new religious philosophy, which found especial prominence alike in the poetry of Wordsworth, and in the theological writings of Coleridge and his followers. I mean their unceasing proclamation of the great, but well-nigh forgotten truth, of the Divine Immanence in Nature, and especially in man.

In order that we may the better understand the meaning of the first of these truths, of which Wordsworth was the great exponent, we must pause for a moment to consider what was the state of religious thought in England in the last decade of the eighteenth century, the period during which the earliest of his poems first saw the light. Undoubtedly at that time the ablest and most representative theologian in England was Paley. He summed up and reproduced in his writings at the close of the century all the characteristic features of the preceding age: clearness of style, keenness of observation, acuteness in reasoning, an absence of deep thought, a common-sense dealing with religious matters which was absolutely prosaic, the lack of any high moral or spiritual ideal. His *Natural Theology* was published in the year 1800. Although now somewhat antiquated, it is an able and valuable work. In it he adduces example after example of marvellous design and foresight in the creation and constitution of the universe, and as a result infers that it must be the work of a powerful, wise, and beneficent Being. Just as a watch from the skill of its contrivance, and the elaborate construction of its mechanism, inferred

an intelligent maker, so, only in a higher manner, did that vast machine the universe, with its countless wonderful adaptations of means to ends, and the complex yet harmonious relations existing between its several parts, imply that it was the product of a vast and wise intelligence. That Being, having completed His great work of creation, surveys its result as a mechanic might a machine which he had succeeded in completing, and may even at times interfere with its working, to remedy any deficiencies which may appear from time to time in its construction and methods.

We need not now stop to do justice to the truth contained in this school of theology, a truth too often overlooked in our own day, but few will hesitate to acknowledge that at all events it is defective and incomplete. It may have to some extent satisfied the claims of the intellect, but it could have been but a weak stimulus to the conscience, and it failed wholly to arouse emotion or to inspire enthusiasm ; and it failed because of its conception of God, and its view of the universe. It regarded God too much in the light of a mere mechanic, too much as a mere carpenter God, and the universe was really not His universe. The Christian deist placed God alone in solitary Being,

far removed from a world which He had indeed created, but from which He was now effectually banished, and which could not reflect in its beauty the glory of His presence, or display in its sunshine the brightness of His Face. It was a huge, cleverly constructed machine, but, like all machines, quite lifeless, composed only of dead matter. It is no wonder, then, that the beauty of Nature had so few attractions for those who lived in that dreary age, with such a barren creed, that the town was considered the only place which had any interest, that majestic scenery inspired only dread and repulsion. It is true that, as time passed on, things altered in some respects, poets began to draw their inspiration, to some extent at least, from country life and country scenes, the town school of poets, of whom Pope was the greatest, was supplanted by others, who, like Cowper, gazed on Nature with a loving eye; but no one had as yet attempted to introduce a more spiritual philosophy, which should give the true relation of Nature to God, and make her a source of spiritual help and contemplation to men.

There can be no doubt that, viewed even from the strictly scientific and metaphysical standpoint, this materialistic view of the world was a false one.

We only know matter by means of and in relation to spirit, and how much of what it sees the eye brings with it, few would care to affirm. Nay, more, that the whole universe only exists in relation to a great Spirit which embraces all else in its view, and is the source of aught else that exists, is not a mere poetic fancy, but is coming to be more and more recognised as the grand central truth of philosophy. But there is no need that we should entangle ourselves in metaphysical subtleties. Mr. Illingworth, in his valuable little book on the *Divine Immanence*, has collected a variety of passages from poets and prophets, showing that in all ages external Nature has been conceived of as having a spiritual significance, and as being one of the great sources through which the spiritual life of man is kindled and sustained. When therefore that source of spiritual truth and beauty is neglected and ignored, life loses much of its joy and strength, it becomes prosaic and commonplace, its outlook is dreary and barren, and when, as in the eighteenth century, other sources of religion have lost their strength, there comes an epoch of moral paralysis. At such times no great deeds are done, the hero and the martyr disappear for a season, until at length some divinely inspired

seer comes forth, whose work is to restore to the human consciousness those truths of God which it has allowed to be forgotten. Now such a divinely inspired prophet was Wordsworth. It was not his mission merely to paint the world of Nature with an accuracy and fidelity hitherto unequalled in English literature, or to elevate and enshrine in the hearts of men the life of the remote cottager in his far-off glen. It was not alone that he gave to his countrymen the power to enjoy such scenery as that of the lovely lakeland, which he more than any other has made dear to them. His work had a higher aim, to restore to men a consciousness of that presence of God in the world, which transforms that nominal, mechanical Being whom men could not truly worship, into the ever-living, ever-loving source of beauty and joy, who lives and moves in all things, and in whom all things have their being.

We have seen how mechanical was the view of Nature held by the theologians and philosophers, and even by the poets, of the eighteenth century. Nor was their view of man very different. He too was a portion of Nature, the best planned and most delicately adjusted part indeed, but still a machine like his surroundings. From the time of Bacon



downwards this conception had grown more and more in strength and power, until it had come to be regarded as the only possible one. Individual thinkers like Berkeley and Butler might struggle against this tendency, and strive to inculcate a higher philosophy, but all their efforts seemed to be unavailing. The unspiritual, mechanical view, which reigned supreme in the selfish theory of Hobbes, in the sense philosophy of Locke, and in the scepticism of Hume, defied all competitors. Unfortunately, too, religion was unable at this time to supply the void which had been left by philosophy, or to minister adequately to the needs of man's higher nature. Its theology, as we have seen in the case of Paley, was akin to the philosophy of the day, its ethics were utilitarian, while as a spiritual power it was latent during the greater part of the eighteenth century. When its influence began again to be felt in the Evangelical movement, it was chiefly by the uneducated classes, among whom no doubt it was a great practical power for good, but it was a long time before it exerted much influence upon higher thought. In the meantime those religious men who cared to think at all, as a rule adopted a Calvinistic creed, which was merely a spiritualised

form of the necessitarian views held by most of the writers on philosophy at that day.

The tendency of thought was evident in the two kindred spheres of metaphysics and ethics. In the former, it tended to restrict knowledge to objects which could be presented to the senses, or to reflection arising from sensation. It thus cut off man from all spiritual knowledge, which could not become an object for the sense-bound understanding. God might indeed instruct man by giving him a revelation. But such a revelation could only be discerned by evidence such as miracles, which appealed primarily to men's senses. In the latter sphere, that of ethics, the predominant theory was utilitarian if not hedonist. Paley gave expression to it in his well-known definition of virtue, so often attacked by Coleridge, as "the doing of good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness". Strangely enough, all through the eighteenth century, perhaps in opposition to the theories of the deist Shaftesbury, the tone of Christian ethics was decidedly utilitarian. Thus it was reserved for a great lay teacher, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to recall the Church to a sense of her duty, and to restore to man the consciousness of his rights.

We must now briefly examine some of the main points upon which his teaching hinged, and by which he endeavoured to establish the dignity of man, and his connection with the spiritual sphere. Chief among these was the distinction which he drew between the faculties of reason and understanding. Most of us are familiar with Kant's contrast between the speculative and the practical reason in their limitation and working. While the former is restrained by its nature and constitution to the cognisance of the finite, the latter can ascend to the throne of God, and, through the intuitions of conscience, claim for itself a practical knowledge of those spiritual truths, the apprehension of which eludes the merely speculative philosopher. Now very similar, if not quite identical, was the difference which Coleridge laid down between the two faculties, and which, no doubt he owed to the philosopher of Königsberg. His nomenclature is indeed somewhat different, but his definitions are sometimes identical. Thus he defines the understanding as "the faculty judging according to sense". Reason, on the other hand, he describes as "the power of universal and necessary convictions, the source and substance of truths above sense, and having their evidence in themselves".

Understanding exists in various orders of creatures, as in the lower animals, varying in its nature according to its possessor, so we may without tautology speak of the "human understanding". Reason, on the other hand, ever is and only can be one, even that light which lighteth every man's individual understanding, and thus maketh it a reasonable understanding. There is, however, a distinction to be observed in the reason itself, according to the methods by which it is applied, or the objects to which it is directed. "Contemplated distinctly in reference to formal or abstract truth it is the speculative reason ;" but in reference to actual or moral truth, as the fountain of ideas or the light of conscience, we name it the practical reason. The redemption of man consists in the self-surrender of the individual will to the universal will, and in the intercommunion of the human and the Divine Spirit. The understanding is discursive, refers to some other faculty as the ultimate authority in all its judgments, and may be called the faculty of reflection. The reason is fixed, is its own ultimate authority for its own decisions as regards their truth or substance, and is in one way nearer to sense than understanding, for it has the same relation to the spiritual that sense has

to the material world. The difference between them is then not one of degree, but of kind, and on a true insight into the nature of this difference depends to a great extent the power of reflecting aright upon religious truths. Understanding by itself can at most give us the idea of an absolute being, or lead us to one of the many forms of pantheism which have been the goal of all systems of philosophy founded on the intellect alone. The conscience must be called in to aid the speculations of the pure intellect, before any truly religious basis for thought can be reached. Of course the result gained is of the highest consequence. The sensationalists may be right as regards the limitations which they have imposed upon the human understanding, but man possesses in his conscience a power for moral and spiritual intuition which is not subject to such restraints.

Of course, in the position which Coleridge assigned to the conscience and the moral sense, he came into direct collision with the utilitarian school of moralists, and his opposition to their tenets forms the second great feature in his philosophy. And this opposition was uncompromising. Thus, in an essay in *The Friend*, he argues with great force against Paley's doctrine, that the gen-

eral consequences were the best criterion of the right or wrong of particular actions. In the first place, he argued, the criterion was a purely ideal one, for it would vary with the notions of the individual who might happen to calculate the general consequences. And secondly, it confounded morality with law. The value of an action does not really depend in the moral scale so much on the consequences which may follow, as on the motives which prompt its performance. The utilitarians fixed attention upon the outward action, and did not examine the root from which it sprang. Many evil actions have been so over-ruled by Providence as to have good results, but this does not alter the quality of the act itself. It must have its root in the unseen, that is, it must spring from a real faith to be of any true worth.

To the subject of faith Coleridge devoted particular attention. It formed the connecting link between his theories of thought and of action. It consists in the recognition by a man of the presence within him of the universal reason, the representative of the mind and will of God, and in the submission of his own will to the universal reason, as the representative of the Divine Will. From the harmony between the human and the Divine

Will there issues the true peace of an approving conscience. The spiritual nature of man, and the presence in him of reason is to be discerned by this exercise of will. To this subject refer the two short axioms which Coleridge takes for granted as the basis of religious philosophy. They are: "If there be aught spiritual in man, the Will must be such," and "If there be a Will, there must be a spirituality in man". Man does indeed possess a will, but it is a fallen and a diseased one. Accordingly, the religious thinker has to contend against two extreme methods of thought, on the one hand, with the necessitarians who denied all freedom of will to man, and on the other, with a certain class of deistic and Platonic teachers such as Shaftesbury, who denied the corruption of man's will, or at all events maintained that it was so slight, that he would in himself find no difficulty in setting it right again. In opposition to both these views Christianity, by appealing to the reason and will of man, assumes the existence in him of a spiritual nature, while by promising to him aid and grace for the restoration of that nature, it presupposes that recovery to be beyond his own power. This position Coleridge enforces by an appeal to the consciousness and experience



of his readers. Here then we come to the point of transition from philosophy to religion. Philosophy lays down great principles with regard to man. He is not merely "Nature's noblest animal," but is a partaker of the Divine Reason whereby he can discern spiritual things, and he has that reason within him as faith whereby he can act from spiritual motives. He can identify himself with this reason, and the root of all evil, both in philosophy and in practice, is the setting up of human centres of action in opposition to the one Divine principle. But men have chosen self as their portion, and fallen away from the good, and vainly seek for a path, by which they may ascend again to the place whence they have fallen. Religion then, and Christianity in particular, in providing such a way of return, is the Divine response to human needs, and as such appeals to the hearts and consciences of men. The Christian apologist had based his arguments chiefly on external evidences, such as miracles and the fulfilment of prophecy. For years a surfeit of such books had been poured forth by the press, and revelation had been received merely as a series of historical events, which were chiefly valuable as testifying to the fact of a future sphere of existence, where

virtue and vice would be suitably rewarded and punished. The higher appeal to the hearts and consciences of men seemed to be well-nigh forgotten. "Evidences of Christianity," exclaimed Coleridge at the conclusion of his *Aids to Reflection*, "I am weary of the word. Make a man feel the want of it; rouse him if you can to the self-knowledge of his need of it; and you may safely trust it to its own evidence, remembering only the express declaration of Christ Himself, 'No man cometh to Me, unless the Father leadeth him'."

Perhaps no better example of the method of Coleridge in dealing with theology could be adduced than the way in which he approaches the consideration of the highest of all religious beliefs, that of the existence of God. I quote Coleridge's own words as they are given in Principal Shairp's well-known and most valuable essay on the poet. "Because," he says, "I possess Reason, or a law of right and wrong, which, uniting with the sense of moral responsibility, constitutes my conscience, hence it is my absolute duty to believe, and I do believe, that there is a God, that is, a Being in Whom supreme Reason and a most Holy Will are one with infinite power; and that all Holy Will is coincident with the Will of God, and

therefore secure in its ultimate consequences by His omnipotence. The wonderful works of God in the sensible world are a perpetual discourse, reminding me of His existence, and shadowing out to me His perfections. But as all language presupposes in the intelligent hearer or reader those primary notions which it symbolises, . . . even so, I believe that the notion of God is essential to the human mind; and that it is called forth into distinct consciousness principally by the conscience, and auxiliarily by the manifest adaptation of means to ends in the outward creation. It is therefore evident to my Reason, that the existence of God is absolutely and necessarily insusceptible of a scientific demonstration, and that Scripture so represents it. For it commands us to believe in one God. Now all commandment necessarily relates to the Will; whereas all scientific demonstration is independent of the Will, and is demonstrative only in so far as it is compulsory on the mind *volentem, nolentem*."

When we pass from the subject of the existence of God to the doctrines of revelation, we find them treated in a similar spirit. The key to Coleridge's teaching on these subjects seems to be the great truth of which we have ventured to call him the

principal exponent, "the immanence of God in man". It is to this we suppose Dr. Martineau refers<sup>1</sup> when he speaks of the quality of religious realism, which distinguishes his writings and those of his school. Undoubtedly such existences as "God," "Spirit" and "Righteousness," were very real to him, not mere notional abstractions which stood apart from him, and with which he did not come into immediate contact, but they signified great realities which were indeed a part of his very existence.

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

Religion, therefore, could not wholly or even principally be concerned with outward relations between man and a Being external to him, but its essence must consist in the internal change which it sought to effect upon a man's own life and character. We may notice this feature in Coleridge's discussions upon the doctrines of original sin and the atonement in the *Aids to Reflection*. The first of these had been chiefly viewed by divines as the imputation to the various members of the human family of the crime of one common ancestor. It was a sort of external curse

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. i., p. 258.

resting upon the race, under which each man lay, independently of any act of his own. Not so was it regarded by Coleridge. In its essence it was not something external to a man, but consisted in that falling away and corruption of each man's will, which, although we can not in each case say when it first occurred, is attested by the universal evidence of all religions, and the testimony of each individual experience. And as in the case of original sin, so likewise was it with regard to the doctrine of the atonement. Too often it had been regarded as a mere legal transaction, the removal of a penalty, through the action of a substitute in bearing it. But here, too, there is a higher view. Through His sacrifice Christ is made to us a quickening Spirit. The Christian message is a message of redemption, and that not merely from the consequences of sin but from sin itself. "Coleridge and his school," says Dr. Martineau, "everywhere denounce the Calvinistic doctrines of hereditary depravity and of penal satisfaction, as turning man from a person into a thing, and denying to God all moral attributes. The primary conditions of any true theory of redemption are, that the whole operation takes place on humanity; and that it both finds and leaves man

a free agent. Neither of these conditions is complied with by any form of the Calvinistic scheme."<sup>1</sup>

It would be quite impossible to discuss at any length the opinions of Coleridge upon the various points of Christian doctrine, and we can only mention in passing his *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, in which he perhaps was the first Englishman who approached in a critical spirit the question of the inspiration of the Bible, and thus became the forerunner of that great movement of thought and research, which is such a prominent feature in our own day. Neither can we pause now to notice the cavils which have been so often raised against his treatment of theological subjects.

Undoubtedly many of the objections which have been raised hold good, not so much against the positions which he adopted, as against some of the extreme speculations advanced by those who called themselves his followers. It may be that he carried his opposition against the evidential school too far, and underrated the external arguments for the Christian revelation. But he certainly was very far from desiring to minimise or explain away the supernatural element in religion. He would

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. i., p. 258.

probably have seen in "the implication of doctrine in miracles, and of miracle in doctrine" (to borrow an expression of his own, though used in a somewhat different connection), the sure and irrefragable basis on which to rear the superstructure of revealed religion. We must take him as he is, unsystematic; a man who, as De Quincey said, finished nothing except his sentences, one of Nature's great elemental forces, who teaches us chiefly by little hints, and pregnant aphorisms; and yet take him all in all, and we cannot fail to recognise in him the man who has most profoundly and widely influenced the spiritual and religious thought of the last century. Some may think this remark a bold one, and perhaps the concluding pages of this lecture might be best employed in proving the truth of the assertion. It would be easy with this object to bring forward testimony after testimony to the stimulating effect which his influence has had on individual thinkers, or to point out how every branch of religious thought and inquiry has benefited through his labours, and how his life and writings mark a new epoch, in England at all events, in the various departments of Philosophy, Ethics, and Biblical Criticism. To do so, however, would



be a task requiring not merely a lecture, but a volume, and all that we can here attempt, is to call attention to the influence which he undoubtedly exerted upon the two greatest movements in religious thought in England, in the years which immediately succeeded his death.

The first of these is the one which is generally known as the Oxford movement. It was inaugurated during the last year of Coleridge's life, and it is curious to reflect what would have been his judgment upon it taken as a whole. One can hardly doubt that there would have been much, especially in its later stages, with which he would have had no sympathy. And yet no doubt the romantic poetry of Wordsworth, and the poetical theology of Coleridge, were real factors in bringing about that great movement of thought, and their influence has been acknowledged both by Keble and Newman.

This is perhaps a fitting place in which to say a few words about the theory of Faith expounded by Newman in his *University Sermons* and *Grammar of Assent*, and the relation in which he stands to his two great philosophical predecessors, Butler and Coleridge. To the first named of these, whom he regarded as the greatest light of the English

Church, his obligations are many, and are frequently acknowledged.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed Newman seems to have made Butler's philosophy the basis on which to rest his own system of theology, and in one sense may be looked upon as the greatest of Butler's disciples. He was not so directly influenced by Coleridge, many of whose views he would have regarded with suspicion, and whose licence of speculation he looked upon as almost heathenish.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless there are many striking resemblances in their treatment of fundamental religious truths, and the basis which they laid for faith in conscience, and the truths of natural religion. Attention has indeed been called to this fact by Newman in a note to his sermon "On the Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively". These points of similarity have been thus summed up by Dr. Martineau: "They agree in seeking the germ of devout belief in the conscience; in recognising the essentially religious character of morality; in making faith the prior condition of spiritual knowledge, and vindicating

<sup>1</sup> See a letter of his to Provost Hawkins, quoted in Dean Bernard's introduction to his edition of Butler.

<sup>2</sup> See *Apologia*, p. 97.

the maxim, *Credo, ut intelligam*".<sup>1</sup> These resemblances may be very easily noticed by a comparison between the passage quoted from Coleridge upon our knowledge of God's existence, and the remarkable chapter in the *Grammar of Assent* upon "Belief in One God". Both thinkers agree in making conscience the chief factor in forming this primary religious belief, and both seek for its ultimate foundation in those deep intuitive natural beliefs, which transcend all merely logical analysis. We have seen that Coleridge regarded such beliefs as the product of the reason, and, as such, from their nature self-evidencing. They were in fact a portion of that light "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world". In this matter, too, Newman agreed with him. He, too, was a firm believer in the Divine dispensation of paganism. He even says of it: "It may be even questioned whether there be any essential character of Scripture doctrine which is without a place in this moral revelation".<sup>2</sup> We may indeed view the teaching of both Coleridge and Newman as a return to the theology of the great Alexandrian

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. i, p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> *University Sermons*, "On the Influence of Natural and Revealed Religion Respectively".

Fathers, the leading characteristics of which we briefly sketched in our first lecture, and which Newman seems to have to a great extent adopted, with whatever alloys it may have been mingled in his case. It is perhaps scarcely necessary to add one more point of agreement between the two philosophers, their firm assertion of the dignity and moral nature of man, and their claim for him of the power of free-will. It was indeed only too necessary, even in the last century, to assert such a claim against the still powerful influence of a narrow rigid Calvinism.

Newman's theory of religious belief, to which we have already referred, may be viewed as a protest against the philosophy of Locke, and the theology of the evidential school. The aim of Christian apologists had been to isolate the historical external evidences for that revelation, and to endeavour to judge of their validity by a purely critical process, the work of sensation and reflection alone. But Newman clearly saw that, in matters of religion at all events, such a process was quite impossible. The external evidences for Christianity could not be separated from their surroundings, and judged apart from the revelation of which they were the credentials; and still more was

it entirely out of the question that any one could approach the consideration of those evidences without prepossessions and presuppositions in his own mind, which would materially affect his opinion of their sufficiency. Such presuppositions would be influenced by his general character, his mode of life, his aspirations and desires, and would to a great extent consist of his views upon such matters as the nature of morality, the existence of God, and other questions of natural religion. Thus, a man with a firm belief in a personal God would be disposed to look favourably upon the evidences for a revelation, and one with a strong sense of sin would find little difficulty in accepting the doctrine of the atonement. The connection between the two might not be clearly discerned by the individual himself, but though latent its influence would be very strong. Thus to quote Newman: "Accordingly, instead of saying that the truths of Revelation depend on those of Natural Religion, it is more pertinent to say that belief in revealed truths depends on belief in natural".<sup>1</sup> So clearly is this doctrine set forth in the *Grammar of Assent* that, although we can scarcely call

<sup>1</sup> *Grammar of Assent*, p. 413.

it original, we may agree with Dr. James Mozley<sup>1</sup> in regarding that work as developing a new line of argument, and marking a new epoch in the history of Christian apologetics. A single quotation must suffice to indicate the general line of argument which pervades the book: "Relying then on these authorities, human and Divine, I have no scruple in beginning the review I shall take of Christianity by professing to consult only for those whose minds are properly prepared for it; and by being prepared, I mean to denote those who are imbued with the religious opinions and sentiments which I have identified with Natural Religion. I do not address myself to those who in moral evil and physical see nothing more than imperfections of a parallel nature; who consider that the difference in gravity between the two is one of degree only, not of kind; that moral evil is merely the offspring of physical, and that as we remove the latter so we inevitably remove the former; that there is a progress of the human race which tends to the annihilation of moral evil; that knowledge is virtue, and vice is ignorance; that sin is a bugbear, not a reality; that

<sup>1</sup> Review of the *Grammar of Assent* in his *Lectures and Theological Papers*.

the Creator does not punish except in the sense of correcting; that vengeance in Him would of necessity be vindictiveness; that all we know of Him, be it much or little, is through the laws of Nature; that miracles are impossible; that prayer to Him is a superstition; that the fear of Him is unmanly; that sorrow for sin is slavish and abject; that the only intelligible worship of Him is to act well our part in the world, and the only sensible repentance to do better in the future; and that if we do our duties in this life, we may take our chance for the next; and that it is of no use perplexing our minds about the future state, for it is all a matter of guess. These opinions characterise a civilised age; and if I say that I will not argue about Christianity with men who hold them, I do so, not as claiming any right to be impatient or peremptory with any one, but because it is plainly absurd to attempt to prove a second proposition to those who do not admit the first.”<sup>1</sup>

So much of Newman’s philosophy, and the relation in which it stood to that of Coleridge; but a word must be said in the same connection with regard to the general teaching of the Oxford school. Without, then, expressing any opinion on

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 415, 416.



the methods adopted by its leaders, or the form which their theology assumed, let us ask ourselves what was the real cause of the immense influence which they exerted upon their contemporaries. And the answer I believe is that they taught, however imperfectly, through sign and symbol, and sacrament, and most of all by the prominence which they gave to the great truth of the Incarnation, as of the very essence of religion, the immanence of God in Nature, and still more the immanence of God in man. It was not alone that, under the influence of the romantic school, they claimed beauty as one of God's gifts, to be devoted to His service, and restored order, and dignity, and loveliness to the services of their Church, but they too were religious realists. They did not value a merely notional faith, or barren ordinances, but the sacraments and order of the Church were prized by them, as the channels through which the Divine Spirit, present everywhere throughout God's universe, especially found an entrance into the hearts and souls of men, and came to dwell even in their bodies as in a temple.

Yet, as I have said, the Oxford movement sounded in many respects a different note from that which was the dominant one in Coleridge's mind, and

was at most in very imperfect sympathy with his philosophy. But there was another band of thinkers, the leaders of a religious movement, who could claim much more fairly to represent in their theology the mind and thought of Coleridge. In his later days, while resident at Highgate near London, the old sage attracted to himself, a number of the thoughtful youth of the younger generation, who came to listen to his words of wisdom, and whose minds were moulded chiefly through the impress of his thoughts. Such men were Archdeacon Hare, and Archbishop Trench, and John Sterling, and such above all was Frederick Denison Maurice.

We frequently hear Maurice classed with Newman, as one of the two great influences in the English Church during the last century, and we are perhaps surprised to find such a lofty position assigned to him. Undoubtedly he was wanting in that fixity of thought and clearness of style which gave to Newman his unparalleled influence. And yet I think that the influence of Maurice has been, indirectly at all events, more widely felt throughout the religious world. His most illustrious disciple was undoubtedly Charles Kingsley, who himself traced, to no small extent, his

deliverance from scepticism, and the restoration of his religious faith, to the study of Coleridge. What then was the most prominent feature in their teaching? Precisely that which we have described as the key-note of Coleridge's thought: "The immanence of God in man". For God was no longer to them the distant Creator, but the ever-living, ever-loving Father, and on this great fact of the Fatherhood of God was to be found the only true basis of religion for mankind. Christ too was no longer to be viewed only as an historic person, who appeared to men for a few short years in the first century of our era. Rather as the Logos or Divine Wisdom, He had dwelt in the hearts and minds of men as "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," until at length that Divine Logos became incarnate in the Person of Christ Jesus. Men could now recognise His Divinity in the correspondence between His life and teaching and the leading and prompting of that light which dwelt within them, in the response made by the unincarnate wisdom, through their higher natures, to the appeal of the Incarnate Wisdom in the Person of the Saviour of mankind; and the true goal of existence was the establishing, or helping to establish, the kingdom of God

on earth, the kingdom whose bonds and essence were righteousness.

There is perhaps nothing very new or striking to us in those views. It does not seem to us strange that God should really care for, and be the Father of, those beings whom He has created in His Own Image and Likeness, and we are amazed at the stupid and anti-Idealistic views of the men who failed to understand such ideas, and labelled them as Broad-Church heresies. But fifty years ago matters were very different, and Maurice and his followers had to undergo a perfect storm of opposition and persecution from narrow traditionalists of the old school, both of the High and of the Low Church parties.

We sympathise strongly with the efforts of these men to introduce a higher tone, and a loftier morality into the religious world of their day, but while doing so we must not fail once more to remember with gratitude the mighty genius who first by word and pen awoke the men of his day to lofty thoughts and generous enthusiasms, which hitherto had lain unkindled in their breasts; the sage of Highgate, who in some of the darkest and dreariest hours of English religious history alone strove to keep alive the well-nigh extinct spark

of spiritual life in the hearts of his countrymen, by the aid of deep and noble thought ; who, when men knew of no God, save the distant Creator, removed far away from His children, an artificer but not a Father, a God of law but not of love, brought Christianity once more before men and presented it to them as “the Revelation of One who is, at one and the same time, Father, Son, and Spirit ; above all, through all, and in all ”.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Caird, *Philosophy of Religion*, p. 343.

## LECTURE V.

### THEOLOGY AND EVOLUTION

But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work (St. John v. 17).

IN the preceding lectures we have briefly surveyed the various converging lines of defence which successive ages of Christian thought have erected on behalf of our Faith. We have seen how the philosophy of Butler was supplemented by the historical defences of Paley and the evidential school. And in a new age fresh needs and deeper questionings were met by the teaching of Coleridge, and the lines of thought developed on the one hand by Newman and on the other by Maurice and Kingsley. Surely one might have supposed that the united efforts of such thinkers would have succeeded in placing revealed religion in a secure position, far above the reach of cavil or assault. Such indeed may have seemed to be the case fifty years ago, but even then the material for a great attack was being prepared, and during the last half century not only Christianity, but even the most fundamental religious beliefs, have had to

run the gauntlet of assaults, more subtle and more dangerous than at any other period.

The first symptom of the coming contest was the stir raised by Strauss' *Leben Jesu*, which first saw the light in 1835. German literature and theology were, however, as yet but little known in England, and it was not until after the break up of the Oxford movement that modern sceptical thought first found a home in our country, in the writings of such men as Francis Newman and J. A. Froude, who had come in contact with the Tractarians, and, feeling unable to follow them, became the leaders of a reaction which tended towards rationalism. Next there came the influence of Thomas Carlyle, and of German literature, the study of which he chiefly helped to make popular in England. Rationalistic thought was thus in its earlier stages chiefly of a literary kind, and on the whole did good. The scepticism of the day was not very deep. It was the age of such broad Churchmen as Maurice, and Kingsley, and Robertson of Brighton; of such devout theists as Martineau; of such liberal-minded but thoroughly spiritual poets as Tennyson and Browning.

But as the movement proceeded, its tone al-



tered. Its criticism, as seen in Bishop Colenso, or in *Essays and Reviews*, became more remorseless. The appearance too of Darwin's *Origin of Species* marked an epoch in its history. Whatever we may now think of the doctrine of evolution, there is no doubt that forty years ago the majority of those who advocated or opposed its claims really believed that it was hostile, not only to revelation, but even to the primary truths of religion. It took a whole generation before its true position was correctly understood, and that generation was a thoroughly sceptical one. Such a belief as the very existence of God, if not usually openly denied, was at all events treated as an undecided question, which it was beyond the power of man's intellect to settle either in one way or the other, and such views found a powerful expression in the sensational philosophy of Mill, or the agnosticism of Spencer. While, side by side with the scientific and philosophical movement, a new school of historical criticism, which originated in the German University of Tübingen, found considerable acceptance in England, where it was popularised by such books as *Supernatural Religion*. Its whole tendency was to relegate the books of the New Testament to a late date in the

second century, and to deny the existence of any authentic records of a contemporary date for the first beginnings of Christian history.

Consequent upon this deeper current of doubt, a change passed over the spirit of the sceptical movement. The works of Francis Newman and others of the same school of thought have been compared<sup>1</sup> to a brilliant sunset, when that orb is seen in all its splendour, before it is completely lost to sight in clouds and darkness. The hopeful tone with which they confronted the new problems of life and thought soon gave way as the difficulties to be met increased, and as men despaired of finding any satisfactory solution of the dark enigmas of human existence. The profound melancholy which took its place is illustrated in the frequent discussion of the question: "Is life worth living?" And while at first thinkers had advocated a hopeful view of the future, at a later epoch they often taught that resignation to our limitations was the most which we could attain to. In our general literature the contrast which is here indicated may be illustrated, by a comparison between the strong faith of "In Memoriam" and the buoyant hopefulness of Clough's

<sup>1</sup> By Dr. Salmon.

poems on the one hand, and on the other, the air of melancholy resignation to be found in some of Tennyson's later poems and in those of Matthew Arnold.

It was unfortunate that the sudden appearance of the critical and scientific movement in England in 1860 was, as it seems, wholly unexpected, and apologists and conservative theologians had to meet the new rationalism with the rusty weapons and worn-out arguments of past controversies. As might be expected, too, in such a state of panic they failed to understand in many cases the positions which they were called upon to defend, and too often confused the legitimate deductions of science and criticism, with the rash, unwarrantable theological speculations which were frequently drawn from them. It would be easy to quote examples of this mistake from the numerous answers to *Essays and Reviews* and the general theological writings of forty years ago, but it may be more strikingly shown by a reference to the two most influential divines of that period, Bishop Wilberforce and Dr. Pusey. The former was the strenuous opponent of the Darwinian theory of evolution in all its forms, and was not content to resist it by argument, but also endeavoured to make it

the object of sarcasm and ridicule, a method of procedure which laid him open to the accusation fiercely hurled at him by Huxley, of being absolutely destitute of any love for, or desire to find out, the truth in such matters. It may of course be said that Wilberforce was rather a popular writer than either a profound thinker or a deep scholar, but the same defence cannot be urged on behalf of Dr. Pusey, the most learned Churchman of his day. In his *Lectures on the Prophet Daniel* he maintained with great vigour the conservative position in opposition to the assaults of hostile critics, and especially of *Essays and Reviews*. The work is a perfect mine of information and valuable suggestions which will always repay its study, but its tone and temper are disfigured by the *Odium Theologicum* in its worst form, while its author seemed willing to make the Book of Daniel and its authenticity the battle-ground on which to decide the truth of revelation, and would thus rest the argument for Christianity on a highly doubtful critical conclusion.

It was not long, however, before able religious champions appeared of a very different kind. In opposition to the materialistic philosophy of Huxley and Spencer, there sprang up a new school of

spiritual metaphysicians, who found a brilliant representative in Thomas Hill Green, while the cause of natural theology and transcendental ethics found an exponent in one of the great religious teachers of the century, James Martineau. Second only to these, were a group of Scotch metaphysicians and theologians, who fully maintained the high reputation which their country had long possessed in these departments. Such, to mention only a few of the chief names were, the Duke of Argyll, Principals Tulloch and Caird, Professor Flint and Dr. Matheson. These writers had no hesitation in accepting such theories as those of evolution or natural selection, as at least probable hypotheses, while at the same time they spent all their strength in showing that such scientific methods were merely an attempt to explain the manner while leaving untouched the great fundamental problem of the source of creation; and that so far from impairing they really tended to strengthen theistic belief. Thanks to their efforts, a better understanding has already been arrived at between theologians and men of science, and in this connection I must not omit to mention the name of Dr. Temple, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, whose Bampton Lectures on *The Relation*

*between Science and Religion* were a valuable contribution towards the attempt to define the respective spheres, and prevent any collision between those two great departments of human thought.

The last generation too has been marked by the rise among us of a school of Biblical criticism, which for solid learning and accurate research rivals even that of the German masters of this art. At its head stand three distinguished names, those of Dr. Lightfoot and Dr. Westcott, successively Bishops of Durham, and our own late Provost, Dr. Salmon. The result of their labours has been to strengthen greatly the traditional view as regards the authenticity of the books of the New Testament Canon and the general current of early Church history, and to hinder the spread of extreme views on these subjects, which, thanks to their efforts, have never been popular in England. Even in Germany the extreme views of Baur and the Tübingen school have been considerably modified, and are almost wholly abandoned by so advanced a theologian as Dr. Harnack.

I have already referred to the disastrous results which sprang from the failure of theologians to understand the new scientific movement, and their consequent want of sympathy with it. We will

however, be the less disposed to blame them for their mistake when we remember the false and hasty conclusions on theological matters which were formed by the men of science in the last generation, when the belief in evolution and natural selection was supposed to have sounded the death-knell of natural and revealed religion alike. In particular these new discoveries were supposed to have been fatal to the whole notion of design in creation, and to the teleological argument for the existence of God. Thus Professor Huxley in one of his lay sermons says: "The teleological argument runs thus: an organ or organism (A) is precisely fitted to perform a function or purpose (B); therefore it was specially constructed to perform that purpose. In Paley's famous illustration, the adaptation of all the parts of the watch to the function or purpose of showing the time, is held to be evidence that the watch was specially contrived to that end, on the ground that the only cause we know of, competent to produce such an effect as a watch which shall keep time, is a contriving intelligence, adapting the means directly to that end. Suppose, however, that any one had been able to show that the watch had not been made directly by any person,



but that it was the result of the modification of another watch which kept time but poorly, and that this, again, proceeded from a structure which could hardly be called a watch at all, seeing that it had no figures on the dial, and the hands were rudimentary, and that, going back and back in time, we come at last to a revolving barrel as the earliest traceable rudiment of the whole fabric. And imagine that it had been possible to show that all these changes had resulted first from a tendency in the structure to vary indefinitely, and secondly from something in the surrounding world which helped all variations in the direction of an accurate time-keeper and checked all those in other directions,—then it is obvious that the force of Paley's argument would be gone. For it would be demonstrated that an apparatus thoroughly well adapted to a particular purpose might be the result of a method of trial and error worked by unintelligent agents, as well as of the direct application of the means appropriate to that end by an intelligent agent.”<sup>1</sup>

The above passage is a striking example of the false line of reasoning often pursued by even the ablest scientific men, when discussing subjects

<sup>1</sup> *Lay Sermons*, pp. 330, 331.

which lie outside their own special province. No doubt it is quite true that in the case supposed by Professor Huxley we should be obliged to alter somewhat the form of Paley's argument, but to most of us the existence of a revolving barrel with a tendency in its structure to vary indefinitely, combined with the existence of "something in the surrounding world which helped all variations in the direction of an accurate time-keeper and checked all those in other directions," would be at least as convincing a proof of design as the production at once of the more finished article, the complete watch itself.

Taking our stand then upon this larger teleology we may concede to evolution all that true science can demand, and yet in the elementary constitution of matter itself, in which as disclosed to us by the atomic theory we already see the "manufactured article," in the properties inherent in that matter, in the laws to which it is subject, and the environment in which it has its existence, all of which tend in the one direction, towards the evolution of higher forms of existence and a true progress, we may behold the working of design in a far larger and grander method than was ever dreamed of by Paley and his school.

What is more, this new manner of stating the argument from design is one which is not likely to be affected by any fresh scientific advances. There are many people who, while willing to concede a good deal to the claims of evolution, see in the origin of life itself, and in the appearance of moral and spiritual faculties in man, facts which recent theories cannot account for. I should myself be disposed to agree with their view, but even supposing that in the future we should be forced to concede more than at present can be reasonably demanded of us, with regard to spontaneous generation of life, or development in the moral sphere, we should still be able to see the marks of thought and design in that matter which contained within it "the promise and potency of life" or in that first rude germ of spiritual existence, within which lay latent all the faculties of man's nobler self. It has indeed been attempted to explain many of the stages in the process of evolution through the working of "natural selection," but it is only a method of evolution which cannot come into play without the existence of other pre-supposed conditions. It is a form of competition and, to quote Dr. Martineau, "(1) It cannot act except in the presence of some possibility of a

better or worse ; (2) There must be, besides the field of favourable possibility, desire or instinct to lay hold of its opportunities.”<sup>1</sup> Of this desire we can find no trace in inorganic Nature, where all things seem to obey the law of action on the line of least resistance. Only through the action of some power from without could the transition be made to the higher sphere and the realm of the higher laws which govern the development of organised life.

An objection has been raised to this line of argument from the scientific doctrine of the unity of force, and in this way, and under this category, materialism has endeavoured to present itself to the world under the guise of a false simplicity. But it is in vain that we endeavour to merge all differences in a unity which shall be expressed in terms of its lowest factor. The only means by which we can conceive of a transition from a lower to a higher form of force, from mechanical to chemical, or from chemical to vital, is by supposing the later term of the series to be already latent in the former, from which it emerges in a new and distinct form. We can indeed convert the higher term of the series into its equivalent in a lower form, but it is to no purpose that we seek to reverse the process

<sup>1</sup> *Essays*, vol. iv., pp. 602, 603.

and step across the gap which separates the higher from the lower level. And the same is true of the various forms of moral, spiritual and intellectual intuition or activity, which rise far above and transcend all mere sensation. That the lower category came first in order of time, by no means gives it a claim to explain or be the measure of the rest, nor does it impair the validity of the judgments pronounced by the higher faculties. Were it otherwise, it is not merely our religious intuitions which might be called in question, but we should have no guarantee of the veracity of the information given us by our reason or memory itself. When, however, we survey the long process of evolution from its highest summit, we behold in it the unfolding of a thought and life which always existed, ever manifesting itself in truer and nobler forms, and giving its possessors at each step a key with which to unlock some new department of the universe, and unfolds its mysterious secrets.

I do not think that it is necessary for me to dwell at greater length upon the details of a controversy which is so familiar to all students in our own day, and it would be more in consonance with the subject of these lectures to consider the question, whether a frank acceptance of the results of recent

scientific and critical research involves any change in the methods of Christian apologetics, or in the manner of presenting the truths of revelation to men. We first find this important subject engrossing the minds of religious men of science like Professor Fiske, or scientific theologians like the late Aubrey Moore, about twenty years ago, but the results of the new lines of thought thus opened up first attracted universal attention when they were embodied in a remarkable collection of essays entitled *Lux Mundi*, which were first published in 1889. They were the joint production of some of the ablest of the younger theologians in the English Church at that period, and were marked by a skilful and strenuous endeavour to uphold the great dogmas of the Christian creeds, combined with a full recognition of the doctrine of evolution, as the most correct method of expressing the manner of the Divine working, in nature, in society, and in the process of revelation. Undoubtedly it was found necessary to abandon traditional lines of defence and interpretation, but as we have already seen, this has occurred on more than one previous occasion in the history of Christian apologetics, and in itself does not afford any cause for alarm, while on the other hand the new science at the

end of the last century, like the new German philosophy at the beginning, which at first sight appeared so negative and dangerous, may in the end prove a most valuable ally to the Christian faith. The new methods of defence have in recent years been extensively applied, and we can only briefly glance at some of their principal results.

And first we may notice the changed manner of stating the theistic argument. We have seen how the form of the teleological argument had to be altered to meet the objections of the Darwinian theory, and more stress was now laid upon the existence of beauty in the world of Nature, especially in cases where it could not be explained by the action of either "natural" or "sexual selection". This line of thought fortunately came into prominence at a time when the existence of natural beauty, whether in earth, or sea, or sky, has found fuller recognition and appreciation, than at any former period.

Another noteworthy aspect of recent theological literature is the stress laid on the metaphysical argument for the existence of God. It was, of course, the one least affected by the new science. It had survived the scepticism of Kant, and in a



new dress it was frequently presented to the world in the writings of Neo-Kantian and Hegelian Philosophers. The great foe of materialism was accordingly the idealistic philosophy of which the great exponent in England was T. H. Green, and the central point of his teaching was the assertion of the existence of a great spiritual principle in the universe, which alone gave a unity to knowledge, and formed a true basis for a correct system of ethics. The efforts of Green and his followers have in this matter met with very considerable acceptance, materialism has been to a great extent discredited through the revival of transcendentalism, and the course of recent theological speculation in England has been largely coloured by the influence of idealism.

But in this very fact there lay a new danger. Idealism was a purely intellectual movement, and paid but little attention to the religious aspect of the question. Moreover, in the recoil from agnosticism and materialism, it tended towards a thorough-going pantheism, and identified the individual Ego with the central spiritual principle to such an extent as to ignore all real separate individual personal existence, and independent will. In such a system, too, immortality disappeared in a

vague idea of the absorption of the individual in the universal spirit. "In the growth of our experience," says Green, "in the process of our learning to know the world, an animal organism, which has its history in time, gradually becomes the vehicle of an eternally complete consciousness. What we call our mental history is not a history of this consciousness, which in itself can have no history, but a history of the process by which the animal organism becomes its vehicle."<sup>1</sup>

Attention was drawn to this defect in the idealist philosophy by Professor Seth in his lectures on *Hegelianism and Personality*, and at a later date by Mr. A. J. Balfour in his *Foundations of Belief*, and Dr. James Ward in his valuable work *Naturalism and Agnosticism*. In this connection, too, I may refer to the important series of Donnellan Lectures delivered before this university on *Idealism and Theology* by the present Bishop of Clogher. No doubt these writers would agree in many respects with the system which they are obliged to criticise, and we may observe in many instances the attempt to construct a theology on an idealistic basis which is freed from the later additions of German philosophy. Such a basis

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 72.

has been sought in the idealism of Bishop Berkeley, and in fresh developments of the lines of thought first sketched by that great philosopher. A good example of this will be found in the discussion of theism in a recent volume of Oxford essays entitled *Contentio Veritatis*. Dr. Rashdall, the writer of the first of these, thus approaches the subject: "Idealism is," he says, "as I believe, the necessary basis of theism for minds which want to get at the bottom of things. The line of thought which leads to the adoption of this view may best be mastered by a perusal of Bishop Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*. However much Bishop Berkeley's argument requires to be corrected by the criticism of that later form of idealism which begins with Kant, his writings remain the classical expression of the view which all genuine idealists agree in accepting as the basis of a true theory of the universe—the view that 'matter' or 'things' exist only in mind or 'for' mind, that the idea of matter without mind is an unthinkable absurdity."<sup>1</sup>

But it was not alone the lines of the theistic argument that were affected by the new science,

<sup>1</sup> Essay on "The Basis of Theistic Belief," in *Contentio Veritatis*.

its influence was still more apparent in the weight which it gave to new conceptions of the nature of God and His relation to the universe. We have seen how in the early part of the last century a strong protest was made on behalf of the Divine immanence by such spiritual poets and teachers as Wordsworth and Coleridge ; but this protest, so far from being supported by, was in direct opposition to the science of that day. Modern science was largely developed under mechanical or chemical conceptions and from the time of Bacon had leaned towards deistic or "atomic" views. God had been conceived of as standing apart from the universe, which was ruled by mechanical laws ; and miracles and other external evidences were the true tests of a revelation. This was the distinct attitude towards theology assumed by our greatest scientific thinkers. At first evolution seemed to be only another step in the process by which God was separated more and more from the world. But under the influence of the new biological studies men were brought face to face with new methods of Divine working, which transcended the laws of the lower sciences and involved a higher conception of the theistic problem. "Paley's simile of the watch is no longer applicable to

such a world as this. It must be replaced by the simile of the flower. The universe is not a machine, but an organism, with an indwelling principle of life. It was not made, but it has grown.”<sup>1</sup>

This new idea of the Divine working is not without its Apologetic value. The objection was long ago urged against the Newtonian theory of gravitation, and more recently against the Darwinian theory of evolution, that it appeared to substitute the action of physical forces for the creative working of Deity. If, however, for the out-worn, deistic notion of physical forces we substitute the idea of the Divine creative action, made manifest in every process, and each circumstance of environment, which harmonise in bringing about such a fact as evolution, we reach at once a higher plane of thought, where the opposition between religion and science becomes quite unmeaning and ceases to exist. From a religious standpoint we might express the view of the Divine creative immanence thus arrived at in the words of Christ, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work,” for it has been remarked that while none of our Lord’s utterances contradict the no-

<sup>1</sup> Fiske, *The Idea of God*, p. 131.

tion of evolution, this deeper saying of His seems to be quite in harmony with its main truth. There lies our great safeguard. There is no danger of any one being driven to adopt a materialistic hypothesis who sees in the process called evolution the gradual accomplishing of the sure purpose of God, who creates all things by the Word of His Power.

We have seen, however, that materialism is not the only foe to faith in the present age. More dangerous, because more subtle, is that pantheistic idealism which, starting from apparently the opposite pole of thought to materialism, issues in results scarcely less hostile to religion and morals. The old problem of how to reconcile the truth now once more revived among us of the Divine immanence with that of the true Personality both of God and man, has to be faced by us, as by the early Alexandrian Fathers, and it can be answered in the same manner, by the assertion of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity which, while maintaining firmly the personality of God, asserts that the nature of the Divine existence is not fully expressed by that term, for He is something more, He is supra-personal. Were His Being merely personal in the sense in which that

term might be applied to each member of the human race, He would be but an isolated unit, one among many, who could not stand in a special relationship to each one of us. When we do attempt to rise to the conception of One "in whom we live and move and have our being," we either with the pantheist lose sight of His attribute of personality, or else are constrained to conceive the mode of the Divine existence after a manner such as that which finds its expression in the doctrine of the Trinity as proclaimed in the creeds of Christendom. Such an idea of God may indeed transcend the comprehension of our limited faculties, but it is only natural that such should be the case, while it satisfies the craving that the highest existence should be not a mere unity, but a unity in diversity, which manifests itself in the exercise of Power, Wisdom and Love, and exhibits to us in the infinite Being a mode of existence higher and more complex than even the most organised forms of creation, in which, under the form of evolution, the Divine thought is being gradually unfolded in the universe.

When we pass from the study of evolution as displayed in Nature to the analogous fact of development as seen in the course of history, the



attention of the theological student is at once arrested by the interesting phenomena of the rise and progress of theological beliefs, and the science of comparative religion. And here, too, we have to confront the materialist who points to the supposed low origin and the many base forms which religion has sprung from, or at times appeared in, and the pantheist who, perceiving, in all the higher religions at all events, striking ethical and spiritual points of contact, fails to detect in Christianity the peculiar notes of a specially attested Divine revelation. To the first class of objectors we can reply that even supposing the cases which they bring forward to be instances of genuine development, and not of degradation, yet we must judge of such a process by its final consummation, and not by its initial steps, and meanwhile we can point to some elementary beliefs in God, immortality, prayer or sacrifice, as latent beneath even the grossest superstitions, and containing within them the germs of spiritual growth and expansion. While in the latter case we gladly acknowledge the truth of much that is alleged on behalf of the great heathen religions, and can view such teachers as Buddha or Confucius in the same light as the Alexandrian Fathers did Heraclitus or Socrates.

They too were inspired by the Logos, and their minds illumined by the Divine Light. Yet in their case also we can perceive how fragmentary and incomplete was their knowledge of Divine things, and how it fades away before the pure beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and the light of the incarnation.

From the general study of the growth of religion, we naturally turn to the history of its development among the people of Israel, as recorded for us in the books of the Old Testament. At once we are brought face to face with the moral difficulties which are apparent in the narrative, the crude anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity, the imperfect ethical code, the seeming permission if not sanction given to actions which contradict and offend our moral sense. But in the case of a progressive revelation, as in all other developments, we can only judge of it as a whole and with reference especially to its final goal.

On this subject I quote the words of a strong conservative, Professor Mozley, writing too at a time when the idea of evolution was as yet but imperfectly understood, and scarcely applied at all to the explanation of religious difficulties. He

says:<sup>1</sup> "Scripture was progressive: it went from lower stage to higher, and as it rose from one stage to another it blotted out the commands of an inferior standard and substituted the commands of a higher standard. This was the nature of the dispensation as being progressive; it was the essential action of the Divine government as it acted in that period of the world . . . the very lower steps led to the end, and were for the sake of leading to it. The critic adheres to a class of commands which existed for the moment, as facts of the day; but the turning point is the issue, and the whole can only be interpreted by the event. The morality of Scripture is the morality of the end of Scripture; it is the last standard reached, and what everything else led up to."

From the consideration of the moral difficulties of the Old Testament, we proceed to that of the more recent questions raised by the progress of the higher criticism. It is in this department that many will find the greatest difficulty in accepting the new views, which seem to be the legitimate consequence of even the most reverent criticism of the sacred records. For here traditional and long-cherished beliefs, and methods of interpretation,

<sup>1</sup> *Ruling Ideas of Early Ages*, p. 251.

are openly challenged and set aside. But even here we are beginning to see by the light of our increased knowledge of the past that truth must be presented under a different guise to men and nations, as to individuals, at different stages of their mental growth. There is a period common to both, when profound spiritual thoughts and truths can only be circulated in the form of a parable or anecdote, and assuredly no more lofty or fruitful truths of the kind were ever so taught, than those contained in the early narratives of the book of Genesis. And in the whole history of the development of the religion of Israel, as read by the new light shed upon it, there is a unique and unsurpassed grandeur. We can see how each great event or crisis in the nation's story was over-ruled by Providence, for the working out of a Divine plan to which alike triumph and defeat, glory and suffering, contributed its share. We can see too in the inspired utterances of Prophet and Psalmist, in their gradual growth in the apprehension of Divine truth, and the fulness of their Messianic ideal, no mere piece of mechanical influence by a higher power, but the immanence of God, in their history made manifest especially; and the Divine guidance of the "Light

that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," in their case alone guiding and influencing the course of religion to a perfect consummation.

What of course enables us to infer a wise and benevolent plan in the course of development is the fact, that the evolution which we see going on in Nature or in history is a true progress, rising step by step from lower to higher grades of life and organisation. It is true that the course of that progress has been marred and hindered by great counteracting forces of degradation and decay. The problem of evil is a pressing one, indeed it is far the most serious one which religion has to try to answer. I have purposely, however, avoided all reference to it, as I hope to discuss it at some length in my next lecture, and will endeavour to show that though in the last resort it is, and must probably in our present state remain, insoluble, yet evolution does throw some light upon its mystery, and indicate in what direction we must look for an answer to its difficulties.

At present our standpoint is a purely intellectual one, and what I would wish to point out in this connection is, that, viewed by the light of science alone, evolution is a great process whose final purpose and goal is still a mystery; it is a half-

told tale, a mighty drama of which the denouement is still unknown. We read, with the aid of the nebular hypothesis, the story of the first formation of our planet from the mass of fiery mist and aqueous vapour; we study its early history as it is revealed to us through the countless ages of the geological record; and the Darwinian hypothesis manifests to us a long and chequered struggle as the leading feature of the development of life in our world. And we naturally ask the questions, Why this long struggle for existence? What is to be the end of it all? and above all, What is to be the destiny of man, the highest apparent result of this evolution? And to these questions science can give no clear or definite answer. And the same thing is true of non-Christian religions. It would be quite impossible to bring their teaching into any kind of harmony with our modern ideas of evolution and progress. They either, like classical heathendom, place their golden age in the far-distant past, or, like Buddhism, preach a philosophy of pessimism and despair. They look forward to no bright future, nor can they guarantee either to the individual or to the race any prospect of final perfection. But it is otherwise with our religion. In the

doctrine of the incarnation, and in the Person of Christ Jesus, we see the pledge and type of a perfect development given to humanity, to be obtained for each individual member of that race by union with God, through Him, in whom we see the final and highest revelation of God, and the last stage in the Divine evolution. There can be no doubt that the harmony which is shown to exist between Nature and science on the one hand, and the truth of the incarnation on the other, has powerfully contributed to placing the latter in the position assigned to it in recent religious thought, that of being the great fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, while at the same time it meets a need and satisfies aspirations to which science can supply no answer.

All tended to mankind,  
And, man produced, all has its end thus far ;  
But in completed man begins anew  
A tendency to God. Prognostics told  
Man's near approach ; so in man's self arise  
August anticipations, symbols, types  
Of a dim splendour ever on before  
In that eternal circle life pursues.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *Paracelsus*.



## LECTURE VI.

### THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF EVOLUTION

For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body (Romans viii. 22, 23).

IN our last lecture we considered briefly some of the main results obtained by applying the scientific idea of evolution to the treatment of the evidences both of natural and revealed religion. We found in our study that when rightly viewed the outcome of the modern scientific movement, so far from giving any countenance to an atheistic or materialistic conception of the universe, tended on the contrary to strengthen greatly and give a new meaning to the theistic argument, the method of Divine revelation, and the great truths of the immanence of God and the dignity of man, which occupy so conspicuous a position in recent religious thought.

There is, however, one great difficulty, which, while it confronts all really serious religious belief it may seem well-nigh impossible to reconcile with

the special views which I have just enunciated. I mean the existence of physical and still more of moral evil to the vast extent to which we find them in the world. We can scarcely imagine that a being created in the image of God would be capable of such guilt and crimes, or that a development of humanity in history, under the influence of the Divine Logos should be the theatre of such national calamities, of such world-wide catastrophes, of such victories of mere brute force, and such triumphs of evil principles, as are of constant occurrence in man's chequered career. Undoubtedly the objection is not only a serious one, but it is far and away the most serious religious difficulty which we have to face in the present age.

Yet there have been times when its force was but little felt. Thus the initial moral difficulties had scarcely any place in the deistic movement of the eighteenth century. They seem indeed to have been almost wholly ignored by the shallow thinkers of that school, and this strange omission in their system left them without any defence when assailed by the unanswerable dilemmas of the *Analogy*. Butler indeed was more fully sensible than any of his contemporaries of the seriousness of the moral difficulties, and grappled with them

with all his might, yet in the last resource he could only take refuge in a doctrine of nescience, which placed a sharp curb on the human intellect, and denied to it any power to speculate upon those deeper mysteries of Divine Providence which have given occasion to the highest flights of philosophic thought.

In the last century, as we have seen, a new school of religious thought arose in England, of which Coleridge may be regarded as the founder; and it is interesting to compare the attitude adopted by the members of that school towards the problem which we are now considering, with that which was generally taken up by the followers of Butler. In the case of the former, the dominant idea was that of the full provision made for every human need in the revelation of God through Christ. "Good wrought out of evil," "the consequences of evil to which men have yielded made instruments in their emancipation from the evil itself," "an abyss of love which is deeper than the abyss of death," "a redemption which extends to the whole creation," these are the thoughts which hold a foremost place in the teaching of Maurice.

It was otherwise with the disciples of Butler. I

have ventured to call Newman the greatest of these, and certainly in his case the dark shadow of evil was projected without any relief upon his soul. Thus he writes in an eloquent passage in his *Apologia*: "To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things, as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes, the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity, the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the apostle's words, 'having no hope and without God in the world,'—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and in-

flicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, which is absolutely beyond human solution.”<sup>1</sup>

It must be owned that the first result of the scientific movement was to add strength to the pessimistic view. For it tended to represent the whole history of life on this planet as one long deadly struggle between its various forms, in which the law of prey was continually asserting itself, while the process of natural selection which ended in the survival of the fittest, could mean little else than the victory of the strong, and the annihilation of the weak and helpless. It is instructive in this connection to compare the view of Nature taken by two of our modern poets. Wordsworth, the great teacher of the Divine immanence in Nature, could be as he says—

Well pleased to recognise  
In Nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.<sup>2</sup>

To Tennyson, writing half a century later with a deeper scientific knowledge—

<sup>1</sup> *Apologia*, pp. 241, 242.

<sup>2</sup> *Lines written near Tintern Abbey*.

Nature, red in tooth and claw  
With ravine, shrieked against his creed.<sup>1</sup>

And undoubtedly the scientific view, or indeed any accurate study of Nature, does rudely dispel that cult, which strives to find in her peace and beauty the great balm for souls wearied with the conflicts and sorrows of life.

But it was not alone the conception of Nature that was altered through the advance of science; it affected too the position of man. The epoch of pre-historic man had to be indefinitely extended, and it was an era of savagery and brutality. The man of that age was little more than an animal, and it was difficult indeed to discern in him that image of God in which the ancient records of revelation, and the highest religious thought alike agree in asserting him to have been created; his life here below seemed but a poor probation or preparation for a higher existence; it was not easy to perceive in him the germ of immortality. The world both of Nature and man could not then be more fitly described than in the words of my text when it speaks of the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together.

It was not, however, merely by dwelling on the

<sup>1</sup> *In Memoriam.*

weakness and littleness of humanity that the exponents of evolution sought to disparage its lofty claims. They endeavoured, also, to explain away those proofs of its Divine origin which had been deduced from the higher moral and spiritual nature of man. Their ethics were decidedly utilitarian, and the theory of Herbert Spencer, that truths which seem to us intuitive are really an inheritance transmitted from the slowly formed habits of our forefathers, was eagerly taken up by the school of sense philosophers. The spiritual life of man, too, was looked upon merely as a development of feelings which derived their strength from the survival of early superstitions, and a good example of this method of treatment is Herbert Spencer's own ghost theory, by which he accounts for the origin of religion.

It was, in fact, the supreme moment of the common-sense and sceptical school of philosophy in England, and it had no rival to dispute its supremacy. Those spiritual and idealistic movements which had marked the early years of the century seemed to have run their course, and the great leaders of the German transcendental philosophy were either unknown, or misunderstood in our country. Thus Kant was best known by what is



perhaps the most questionable point in his whole system, his distinction between the Phenomena and the Noumena, and the limitations which he imposed upon thought with regard to the latter. His teaching on this subject was actually made the basis of modern agnosticism, while his more positive assertions with regard to the practical reason were completely ignored. The systems of his successors, which in many ways spiritualised and supplemented the received conceptions of evolution, were slow in making their way among people who regarded them as mere metaphysical jargon, and who were repelled by their real difficulties and obscurities from making any true efforts to understand their meaning.

And yet I think that in the case of the great moral enigma, no less than in that of our intellectual difficulties, we are beginning to see that science is really our friend and not our foe. We believe indeed that the idea which it presents to us of man and his history is incomplete, and requires to be supplemented by the light of revelation; but at the same time we are glad thankfully to make use of whatever help we may derive from science, in explaining the great facts of religion and of life. Thus, it seems highly probable that

the human body has been evolved by a process of development, from that of a lower animal organism. So much science claims, if not to have actually proved, at all events to have shown to be highly probable. But she cannot say that she can speak with the same authority with regard to the soul of man. And that being so, we are content to believe that at a stage in the material evolution, when the body was fitted to become the instrument of a spiritual being, "God breathed into its nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul". But when we combine those two complementary truths, of a spirit sent from above with Divine longings and aspirations, to be the tenant of a body derived from that of the beast with its brute nature and passions, they do certainly illumine with a fresh meaning St. Paul's account, in his Epistle to the Romans, of the two natures in man, and the conflict between them, and that contest between our higher and lower selves, which is a part of the daily experience of each one of us.

It will perhaps seem to some a startling paradox to assert, that evolution has maintained the dignity of man, and made his position, as the goal and crown of our creation, more secure than it had ever hitherto been. For it has in this respect, as

in that of the question of the Divine immanence, turned out in the long run, that the science which at first sight seemed destructive of both these beliefs has in reality been their strongest ally. With the appearance indeed of man upon this planet, a complete change in the methods and aim of evolution took place. Till then, it had moved wholly in the physical sphere, and in the working of natural selection the smallest physical variations had been of the highest importance, while it was continually aiming at the production of new forms of life. But with the advent of man, the physical evolution became quite secondary, it ceased its endeavour to develop any higher organisms than that of the human body, and devoted all its energies to the perfecting and developing of its highest and grandest result, while its position became completely subordinate to that of the psychical evolution of man's nature and powers, which now assumed the foremost place. This change in the method of natural selection would seem to coincide with that stage of its working when we have supposed its action to have been supplemented by the infusion of a Divine spiritual principle, and is so marked as to justify us in regarding man as no mere result of development, but rather to view him

as a fresh manifestation of the creative power of God. It further proves, almost to demonstration, that on this earth, as it now exists, there can never be a higher creature than man, and thus goes a long way towards restoring to him that place as the head and crown of creation, of which science since the days of the Copernican theory, to say nothing of the various forms of materialism, had tended to deprive him.

In the predominance which is now given to the psychical life, we notice a change in the process of natural selection. The survival of the fittest acquires as a term a new meaning, for the race is no longer to the swift, or the battle to the strong. On the contrary, the intellectual and moral powers of man now occupy the highest place, while the lengthening of the period of infancy strengthens the bonds of affection, and the ties of the family. Selfishness gives way to sacrifice, and the claims of the individual are merged in the larger interests of the community to which he belongs. Finally, the development of personality and character is seen to go hand in hand with that of the religious consciousness, and man can read in his own constitution and possibilities the assurance of his own immortality.

When we pass from the domain of anthropology to that of sociology, and view it from the standpoint of the most advanced science, we find it has made a great advance from the positions advocated by the older school of evolutionists, of whom Herbert Spencer may be taken as the leading representative. Undoubtedly the ablest of our recent writers upon social science is Mr. Benjamin Kidd, and his works may be considered as an attempt to apply to the elucidation of social problems that modern view of development, which has found in the region of biology an exponent in Professor Weismann. The older Darwinians had concentrated their attention upon the struggle for existence in the past, and its relation to the individual in the present; but to the new school both past and present assume a subordinate position, and the centre of interest is shifted to the future, and the general welfare of the species in ages yet to come. Science in fact seems disposed to verify the faith of the poet in

One far-off divine event

To which the whole creation moves,

and the nations to whom the future belongs are not necessarily those most highly gifted with intellectual endowments, nor is the progress of society

mainly due to the triumphs of reason alone. On the contrary, the future belongs to those nations who are not dominated by the ascendancy of the present, which was the distinguishing feature of the great civilisations of the ancient world, but who have projected their consciousness beyond the present exigencies of the state, and come under the control of a cosmic development, in which the interests of the present have become subordinate to the larger claims which the future makes upon us. Hence then a demand for sacrifice is made upon us in the interests of, it may be, the far-distant future, but such a demand can derive no sanction from the utilitarian, or any other merely intellectual theory of morals. Yet such sacrifice is absolutely necessary, for on it depends the success and stability of the social organism, in the competition and stress which it must encounter in epochs yet to come. It is then the function of religion to give this ultra-rational, transcendental sanction for which we cannot find a basis in rational considerations, and Mr. Kidd defines religion as "a form of belief, providing an ultra-rational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by

which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Kidd has but little sympathy with the modern attempts to rationalise religion, and points out the failure of all merely philosophical creeds such as positivism, compared with even the lowest forms of supernatural beliefs. Of all the great religions of the world, Christianity is the one which is most impregnated with the supernatural, and is therefore the one the best suited for the function which it has to perform; and, moreover, it has also a peculiar distinguishing characteristic of its own. For it was a prominent feature of Greek thought, and indeed, we may add, of philosophical systems as a whole “that the condition of virtue was regarded as a kind of stable equilibrium within the bounds of social or political consciousness”. But in Christianity the dignity of the individual is forgotten in a profound abasement and an utter contempt of self, and an antithesis is opened between the individual and the world around him, and, it may be added, between the individual and his own nature; and equilibrium can only be restored by a “rise of the individual consciousness to the cosmic, and by a

<sup>1</sup> *Social Evolution*, p. 103.



sense of relationship to the cosmic, as direct, as personal, and as compelling as any by which the human mind has hitherto been related to the present ”.

It is true, indeed, that at a later date the Church endeavoured to bridge over the antithesis to which we have referred by theories of human merit ; but this attempt led in turn to the Reformation, a movement which laid great stress upon human depravity, and the insufficiency of human virtue. Moreover, the Reformation first brought Christianity forth from the cloister, and made it a living power in the world. The results may be seen in the softening influence which religion has exercised among those nations which have accepted the reformed faith, and the philanthropic spirit by which they are animated, while they, too, have displayed a greater capability of sacrifice, and a superior aptitude for grappling with modern social and religious problems.

Such is a brief survey of the religious aspect of sociology, viewed in the light of evolution, as it is set forth by its latest great exponent ; and it suggests to us several important considerations. For it would seem that our ethical notions, like those of a more purely intellectual nature, will

undergo a great change, as our view of the character of the development which is proceeding around us becomes enlarged. We have seen in our last lecture how Darwinism, which was at first supposed to lead to materialism, or, at all events, to a thorough-going deism which removed God farther away than ever from the world of Nature, in the end became the greatest ally of the now generally held view of the Divine immanence in the visible universe. Very similar is the reversal of judgment in ethical questions which is going on side by side with the advent of the new philosophy. In its earlier days the doctrine of development was looked upon as one of the great buttresses of utilitarianism. Attention was concentrated wholly upon the past history of the process of evolution, and the present was studied solely in its relation to the antecedents from which it had sprung. It was attempted to find a justification for every social usage, and a basis for every moral instinct, in the past history of the race. In the long struggle for existence certain customs had been found to conduce to the survival or supremacy of the individual or the species which adopted them, and in course of time had come to be invested with a sort of natural sanction. But their genesis and history could be

traced by the light of our increasing knowledge; and their existence was justified by rational and utilitarian considerations, and needed no transcendental or supernatural support.

When, however, we examine the matter more closely, we become aware of the existence of facts and tendencies, which do not readily admit of an explanation on the rationalistic hypothesis; though we may find a clue to them in that view of evolution put forward by Weismann, which makes the present stage in development but the preparation for the future, to which it is subordinate, and for the sake of which it exists. And, certainly, as we view the cosmic process as a whole, we can not say that its goal is one which can be measured by a merely utilitarian standard, such as the happiness of the species. On the contrary, we are brought face to face with the records of a terrible struggle, in the strain and stress of which the happiness, nay, the very existence of the individual or the species itself is remorselessly sacrificed, and made subservient to other ends of a very different kind, to the attainment of which the whole process of development seems to be leading us. There are indeed some who regard this struggle as only a mere incident in the course of our evolution,

which will soon cease to be a dominant factor in human life; and it is on this belief that the hopes of the socialist are based. Undoubtedly, there is a natural affinity between the theory of utilitarianism in ethics and that of socialism in sociology. Both are eminently rational and seem to justify themselves as intellectual conceptions. But if, as Professor Weismann holds, there is a tendency to retrograde in higher species, which no law of heredity can check, and if the progress or even the present acquirements of the race can only be maintained by a process of competition and selection, then all communities based on a socialistic foundation, where such conditions do not find a place, must perish in a struggle in which they have placed themselves in opposition to the whole tendency of the cosmic process.

Shall we then stigmatise such a ruthless process as unmoral and cruel, regardless alike of the individual and the type, and take refuge in agnosticism or pessimism? Or shall we see in it the signs of a limitation imposed upon the Divine Power, and accept some form of the dualistic hypothesis, which has not wanted followers from the time of Plato to that of Mill? Does it seem to us

As if some lesser God had made the world  
 But had not force to shape it as he would,  
 Till the High God behold it from beyond,  
 And enter it, and make it beautiful? <sup>1</sup>

Whatever else may be said for such a view of the created universe, it is certainly not in harmony with the recent proclamations of science, which finds a unity in Nature considered in all her various departments, which alike obey the same laws, and manifest a similar design. Certainly, too, the nature of the development which we see in progress throughout the universe lends no encouragement to pessimistic views. For the Power and Spirit which finds expression in its course are undoubtedly such as "makes for righteousness". If it cannot justify itself to any merely material or utilitarian standards or calculations, on the other hand it does seem fitted in the long run to produce character, as its last and highest result. If we then approach it from the standpoint of that higher ethics which prizes most results of a moral and spiritual nature, we have a key which will not indeed unlock all mysteries, but nevertheless will disclose to us a fresh meaning in that long and terrible struggle after a higher form of life,

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *Morte d'Arthur*.

which has culminated in the heroism and self-sacrifice that have cast a halo of light around the chequered history of our race, and the love, stronger than death, which has been enshrined in the hearts of the "noble army of martyrs".

But it may be claimed for science that it has not merely demonstrated the inadequacy of materialistic and sceptical theories of philosophy; it has also made some positive contributions towards a solution of the dark enigmas of the universe. Take, for instance, that mystery which at first sight seems wholly inexplicable, the existence of physical pain and suffering in the animal world. The outward world of Nature may assume a mask of beauty and tranquillity, and inspire feelings of peace and rest; but we all know the dread reality which lurks concealed under the thin guise of external loveliness. We know that Nature as a whole is the theatre or battlefield, whereon a fierce struggle is incessantly waged, with all the fell accompaniments of such a struggle, pain and carnage and death, while we seek in vain for any compensation in the form of moral and spiritual results, such as may frequently accrue in the case of a higher order of beings. Now, however, in the light of modern science, we are beginning to per-

ceive a meaning in this cruelty and waste. Only by struggle and opposition are new faculties and tendencies called into play, or do we feel any need for their existence; and those powers which we find so fully developed, even in the lowest stage of humanity, are the result of previous ages of conflict and advance. To demand, indeed, that such a fully equipped and highly developed being as man, should be created and placed in the world without any such previous preparation, would in all probability involve a demand upon Providence, in the nature of a contradiction, which would be impossible for even Omnipotence to perform. For man is the heir to a great and slowly acquired inheritance of which he could have become possessed in no other way, save as the result of a long struggle on the part of his brute ancestors.

When from the question of physical we pass to that of moral evil, with which humanity is more intimately concerned, we are not left wholly in darkness. We have already seen the picture which is presented to us of the two natures which contend for the mastery in man, by the light of evolution, with its theory of the Divine spark imprisoned in the senseless clod. If then man's higher self and true personality were to be developed



and brought into individual self-consciousness, if, in other words, man was intended to realise himself as a spiritual being, how else could that end have been attained save by such a struggle? For only by such opposition could higher forms of consciousness be brought into existence, and only through temptation and trial could man's higher self, his moral and spiritual being, rise to the full measure of its stature and strength. And if it be asked why man is bound to realise himself through the development of his spiritual nature, and why not merely all sensual cravings, but even all selfish desires, should be made subordinate to its claims, the answer lies in a recognition of the Divine immanence in man, and of the great truth that he was created in the Divine image. For man's higher nature is but the reflection and image of that of God; he is subject to Divine influences, to which it is his highest privilege to submit himself, and in obedience to which alone lies the true law of his life. The revolt of the individual against the Divine Spirit, and his setting himself up in opposition to its influences, means decay, and stagnation, and death. Thus Butler's great doctrine of the supremacy of conscience finds its confirmation and assurance in the doctrine of the Divine imma-

nence, so strikingly brought home to us through the teaching of Evolution.

But it is not merely upon ethical questions that a fresh light has been thrown by science; it has also tended to confirm our belief in the validity and permanence of religious truth. Life, we are told on high authority, consists in the harmony of inward conditions with outward environment. It is the plant that can assimilate to itself and make use of the sunshine and dew, that thrives and flourishes; it is when a living organism is placed amidst favourable surroundings, when the climate is congenial to its nature, and the supply of nutriment suitable to its frame, that it grows and expands. But in the course of development a creature appears upon the scene, endued with fresh powers and faculties of a wholly different kind, for it belongs to two worlds. Its connections are not merely with the outward visible course of things, but it also professes to enter into close relations with an unseen spiritual universe. Further, the development of this being proceeds upon the supposition of this communion, and is based upon laws and relations which arise from it. And in proportion as these laws and relations are allowed to control the course of the development

of that being, whom we name man, so far does he advance as an individual, his social faculties are evolved; in succession, the family, the tribe, and the nation arise, and man, the spiritual being, exercises an undisputed sway over all other created objects. What then is the secret of this growth and advance? If in the lower creation it springs from harmony between the organism and its environment, so, too, must it be in the case of man, and that spiritual environment of which man is conscious can be no deception, no mere subjective illusion, but the greatest and most trustworthy reality.

The line of argument which has here been briefly indicated is of course closely connected with the name of Mr. Fiske, who regards it as his own special contribution to the philosophy of religion. It is, however, capable of a wider application than is given to it by that distinguished scientist. He uses it only to establish a belief in the great religious truths of ethical theism, and a future life. To these beliefs he is disposed to attach great weight, because he considers them a part of the universal consciousness of humanity. This fact may well be questioned; but conceding all that he asks in this respect, we may doubt whether, granting the truth and objectivity of the facts and

beliefs presented to us by the religious consciousness, we must make its most limited comprehension, which is common to the whole race, the full measure of its scope and content. If with Mr. Fiske we hold that, since the appearance of man as a distinct species on this planet, Nature has directed all her efforts to his development and perfection, why should not this be as true of his religious consciousness as of the rest of his nature? And that its content when fully developed includes far more than ethical theism, and the belief in a future life, none will deny. It includes the idea of alienation from God, founded on facts, which in their ethical significance are analogous to those described in the early chapters of Genesis, and that keen desire for reconciliation and reunion with the Divine source of holiness and peace, which can find its full satisfaction alone in the truths of the revelation enshrined in the creeds of Christendom. We can see the universality of that desire, as we trace its manifestation even in the rude rites and the inhuman sacrifices of a savage paganism; we see its full satisfaction in that religion which alone could give peace to the troubled intellects and the restless hearts of Augustine and Pascal, of Coleridge and Newman.

But our appeal is not to the Christian consciousness alone, but to the evidences of that life, which consists in the harmony that obtains between the organism and its environment. Let us apply the same test to determine the reality of the Christian revelation, as we have already used to prove the objective reality of religion. We see under the influence of natural religion humanity advance to a certain degree of civilisation and moral culture, but there seem to be fixed limits which without further aid it is unable to exceed. The old creeds of the East seem long since to have run the whole course of their development and to have nothing further left to give to men, no fresh word of encouragement, no new aid for unseen social developments or untried problems, no bright hope to cheer the children of sorrow amid the ills of life. We feel as we turn from the contemplation of them, that, whatever of truth or beauty they may contain, it would be ill for humanity if the future of the race was bound up with any one of them. Far otherwise is the case with Christianity, and with the nations that have embraced its truths. It contains the germs of an infinite progress and the potency of a never-ending life, which gave a new vitality to a decaying

world, and a new birth to effete and worn-out moral and ethical influences. Says Mr. Kidd, contrasting the old Roman civilisation with the new religion: "Underneath all this history of death the observer has outlined before him a remarkable spectacle. It is the phenomenon of a gigantic birth. To the scientific mind, there can be no mistaking the signs which accompany the beginning of life, whether it be the birth of the humblest plant, or of a new solar system; and in the fierce ebullition of life which characterised that extraordinary and little understood period of the world's history, commencing with the first centuries of our era, we have evidently the beginning of a vast series of vital phenomena of profound scientific interest."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the last word of evolution is one of hope and encouragement to man, concerning the supreme question of his own immortality. As long as it was possible to regard the position of man upon the earth as a mere accident, like that of any other animal, so long was it possible to view his future with a like indifference, and attach to it no special significance. But it is otherwise when we begin to realise that such is not the case, and that

<sup>1</sup> *Social Evolution*, p. 123.

so far from man's position being of the kind here indicated, he is rather to be viewed as the crown and goal of creation. All the long previous evolution was designed merely to bring him into existence, and that process can only be understood as the preparation for the advent of a spiritual being; apart from that it becomes devoid of all meaning. For, according to the now generally received nebular hypothesis, we can watch the slow growth of planets from giant balls of condensed vapour, but only to see those worlds, instinct it may be with life and beauty, become cold in death, and finally return to the nebulous cloud from whence they came. Man, too, as regards his body, has a similar tale to tell. If we confine the process of evolution to the material world, it seems to us to be a mighty effort, guided by no purpose, crowned with no result. It is only when we view man as a spiritual being that light is shed upon the whole travail of creation, and a Divine purpose is seen to pervade it all. Man as an immortal being, the supreme result of the handiwork of Nature, with an undying spark of the Divine effluence lodged within his breast, is, and he alone can be, the justification of that mighty work, the beginnings of which bring us back through the past of infinite ages.



The long conflict between theology and science is drawing to a close, and misunderstandings will vanish in the light of a clearer day. Not that all difficulties will ever be removed, we need not expect that; there will always remain a background of mystery to human life, which will necessitate and call forth the exercise of faith. But henceforth it will no longer be possible to object to, or refuse belief in the Christian revelation, because it is contradicted by the laws of Nature; for Nature too is a revelation of God. And in the harmony which exists between these two revelations, as disclosed to us by the advance of science and criticism, is to be found the verification for us of those truths which religious men have accepted by an act of faith, and Christian philosophers by a heroic venture of the intellect, or by seeking for them a deeper basis in that transcendent world of feeling where lie veiled the deepest springs of life and action.

The great poet and thinker to whom, perhaps, it was given to discern more clearly than any of his contemporaries the full import of the modern scientific movement, never lost his faith in the great spiritual purpose which pervaded its course, or in the splendid destiny in store for humanity.

At the close of a long life that faith found expression in an ode which combines scientific accuracy with noble religious intuition.

If my body come from the brutes, tho' somewhat finer  
than their own,

I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be  
mute?

No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,  
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of  
the brute.

I have climb'd to the snows of Age, and I gaze at a field in  
the Past,

Where I sank with the body at times in the sloughs of a  
low desire,

But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the Man is quiet at last  
As he stands on the height of his life with a glimpse of a  
height that is higher.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *By an Evolutionist*.

## LECTURE VII.

### THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY (I.)

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name (St. John xx. 31).

In the preceding lectures I have endeavoured, as far as was possible, to confine our attention to the broad general evidences on which the Christian revelation is based, and have avoided any discussion as to the exact nature and content of that revelation, as such questions seem to be matters which should be settled by the followers of that religion among themselves, and do not come within the domain of Apologetic Theology. There is, however, one marked exception. The small but influential sect of the Unitarians, while they profess the Christian name, differ, as regards their religious tenets, from the Christian faith, as expressed in the creeds of Christendom, not on some mere point of detail. For by rejecting such important truths as those of the incarnation and the atonement, they have introduced a fundamental distinction between their view of revelation and

that held, not merely by the Catholic Church, but by the great body of orthodox Protestants through the whole of Christendom. No account, too, however brief, of the course of English apologetics would be complete without some reference to the Unitarian controversy. For both in our own land, and still more among our countrymen in America, there has been a strong tendency among men of culture to make this form of Christianity a sort of neutral ground, whereon science and religion may find a place for reconciliation and argument, where the former may be wedded to a rational faith, and the latter may appear without her usual accompaniment of mystery and miracle. That a humanitarian Christianity will not in itself be able to effect such an Eirenicon is, I think, now becoming every day more evident; nevertheless many individual thinkers of note on both sides, the scientific and the religious, have adopted this creed in some form or other, and have given it a weight and importance which, though probably only temporary, nevertheless demand our present attention.

We shall not find it difficult to fix the date of the rise of Unitarianism in England. It is not necessary for this purpose that we should take into account the prevalence of Arian views in the

earlier part of the eighteenth century, or their advocacy by such able writers as Samuel Clarke or even the philosopher Locke himself. For Arianism, important as are the issues which it involves, is a question which concerns dogmatic rather than Apologetic Theology. It was not until the close of the century that Socinian, or indeed thorough-going humanitarian views, found a general expression, and then this was chiefly due to the energy and influence of Joseph Priestley. His *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, which appeared in 1782, marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of English apologetics, and the rise of a controversy of which the conclusion as yet seems far distant. At the same time, the positions taken up by both sides in the controversy have undergone considerable modifications during the course of its history. As in the case of the more general Christian apologetics, we may notice the great change which took place early in the nineteenth century. Previously the Unitarian discussion had proceeded much on the same lines with the treatment of the argument for revelation by the school of writers on Christian evidences. It had been purely historical, and had endeavoured to determine the truth or falsehood of the great

doctrines of the Christian creeds, by the same tests which had already been applied to determine the validity of the evidences for the religion itself, and especially of miracles. But about the year 1830 the controversy was raised into a higher atmosphere by the advent of new and lofty spiritual influences, among which a high place must frankly be conceded to the genius of the gifted Channing. As in the case of his contemporary Coleridge, his teaching affected more than one school of thought, and we may safely affirm that the result of his noble and pure spiritual influence will outlast that of his weak and defective theology.

At present we are concerned with the earlier stage of the controversy, and a broad distinction must be drawn between the Unitarianism of pre-Channing days and that of a later date. Judged by the works of such teachers as Channing and Martineau, it may seem to be a creed in which the spiritual nature of man and his free-will occupy an important place ; but the Unitarianism of a century ago was of a very different type. It was the religion of plain, unimaginative common sense, strictly necessitarian in its conception of the universe, and completely subservient to the school of the sense philosophy. Its leading exponent was, as we have

already stated, Priestley, who seems to have reasoned out his own views for himself, though he appears to have been to some extent influenced by Lardner. Among his contemporaries Price and Lindsey may be mentioned, and at a somewhat later date Toulmin and Belsham, Kentish, Lant Carpenter and Yates. These writers were willing to admit the authority of the Bible in the controversy as final, whatever views they might hold on the subject of inspiration, "the Socinians, indeed, venturing in their own interests on an 'Improved Version of the New Testament' which was often remarkable for its deft defiance of grammar".<sup>1</sup> There can be little doubt that they derived much of their strength from the contrast between their views and the narrow Calvinism which was the dominant religion of the day; and while the Church of England suffered much through the loss of individual members, Presbyterians suffered far more, through the secession from among them of a large body, who styled themselves non-subscribing Presbyterians, in 1826.

Champions, however, were not wanting for the defence of the doctrine of the incarnation, and the creed of Nice, at this critical juncture. Fore-

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn, *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 15.



most among them was Bishop Horsley, the protagonist of Priestley. He entered into a racy and somewhat pungent polemic with the latter, and the controversy between them was one of the most famous in our theological annals. Horsley was undoubtedly the better scholar, and was unsparing in detecting and exposing the mistakes of his adversary. Indeed, in an age when divines almost wholly concentrated their attention upon the question of external evidences, it needed the Unitarian attack of Priestley and his school to restore to the consideration of theologians the great articles of the Christian faith, and to place them once again in their proper position, as the distinguishing notes of that revelation.

At a somewhat later date the labours of Bishop Horsley were ably supplemented by those of Dr. Burton, Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Oxford. He devoted himself to the study of early Church history, and in his Bampton Lectures discussed in the most elaborate manner *The Heresies of the Apostolic Age*. Another most useful work of Burton's was his collection of the *Testimonies of the Ante-Nicene Fathers to the Divinity of Christ*. A similar task had already been accomplished by Bishop Bull, but his great work

had been on too large a scale, and too full of profound erudition to be ever popular with any but trained theologians. In this connection, too, we may refer to Newman's *Arians*, a readable and philosophical work, though scarcely marked by the usual genius of its distinguished author. It is, however, not distinctly apologetic, but rather dogmatic in its tone, and does not discuss at any length the humanitarian position.

Conjointly with this great struggle for the central truth of our religion, the doctrine of the atonement had to be defended against the assaults of its Socinian opponents. The first fruits of this controversy was Veysie's *Bampton Lectures on the Atonement*, and it was followed by a long series of works in defence of the traditional dogma on this subject. The leading divines of the day among the orthodox Dissenters were its principal upholders, and their defence was marked by vigorous and acute reasoning. Unfortunately, however, their creed was still tainted with the remains of their former Calvinism, and their arguments weakened by the introduction of analogies drawn from the subtleties of legal relations and procedure. An exception must be made in this respect in the case of the learned and liberal Nonconformist

divine, Dr. Pye Smith, whose *Four Discourses on the Sacrifice and Priesthood of Jesus Christ* are a valuable contribution to the subject we are considering.

But by far the ablest defence of the great doctrine of the atonement against its Socinian assailants was the once well-known work of Archbishop Magee. It suffers indeed from faults in its arrangement and form, consisting as it does of two discourses delivered by him in the chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, while the remainder of three good-sized volumes is taken up with the notes appended to these sermons. Unfortunately the many duties of its learned author in the high position which he afterwards occupied left him no time to remedy the faults arising from its original construction. Nevertheless, in spite of these defects, it has always been regarded as the great classic upon the important subject of which it treats, though no doubt it is now somewhat superseded through the labours of more recent theologians; and we may place it beside the works of Horsley and Burton, as affording the material for the survey which we must now take of the apologetic literature in this stage of the Socinian controversy.

The attack and the defence alike, as we have already stated, were conducted mainly upon historical grounds, and assumed the form of an investigation of the beliefs of the early Christians respecting the Person of the Founder of their religion, as expressed in the books of the New Testament canon, and the early patristic writings. The position taken up by Priestley on this question may be reduced to three heads: (1) That the early Christians held strictly humanitarian views concerning the Person of Jesus Christ: (2) That the notion of the Trinity including His Divinity was borrowed from Greek philosophy, and was first introduced into the Christian religion through the medium of the Platonising divines, of whom Justin Martyr may be regarded as the earliest: (3) That even they regarded His Divinity after the Arian fashion and did not make Him co-equal with God. Of these propositions the first is manifestly the most important, for the others hinge upon it, and upon the answer which we give to it depends our whole conception of the nature and importance of our faith. Accordingly, Priestley made great efforts to maintain its truth by means of strange misquotations of texts from Scripture, and garbled extracts from the Fathers.

His assertions were indeed very risky when they were confronted by the learned researches and masterly works of Pearson, and Bull, and Waterland, who had clearly shown how untenable from a historical standpoint was the Arian, to say nothing of the humanitarian, position; but patristic studies were at this time but little cultivated in the English Church, and Priestley boldly declared that humanitarian views were never censured in the New Testament, which reserved its anathemas only for those who denied the humanity of our Lord; and in support of this assertion he quoted the text 1 John iv. 3, which he translated: "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *of* (where the Authorised Version reads *in*) the flesh is not of God".

It was not of course difficult for a scholar like Horsley to detect and expose such blunders as those which Priestley made, and it was easy to bring forward many passages from the Fathers who preceded Justin Martyr, in support of the Divinity of our Lord. This was especially the case with the Ignatian Epistles, where we find much the same position taken as by Justin himself, and even the same view of Christ as the Logos or Word of God, although the idea is not so fully

developed as in the case of the later and more philosophical writer. Of course, this raised the question of the genuineness of these letters, and it was vindicated by Horsley in answer to the attacks of Priestley.

One point which was strongly urged by Priestley referred to the humanitarian views, which he supposed were held by the Christians of the Church of Jerusalem. The questions involved in this subject are somewhat difficult and obscure, but it would seem that, after the destruction of that city by the Romans, its Christian inhabitants, who had previously made their escape, took up their abode in Pella and other places beyond the Jordan, and were known by the name of "Nazarenes". They still retained many Jewish customs and observances, such as circumcision, holding themselves bound by the Mosaic ordinances. They did not, however, demand a similar obedience to the Jewish law from Gentile converts, and frankly acknowledged the apostleship and work of St. Paul. It does not seem that they held really erroneous or heretical views concerning the Person of Christ, and although this charge has been brought against them, it probably arose from their being confounded with the Judaising sect of the Ebionites.

The distinction between these two was strongly maintained by Horsley, and is generally recognised by recent writers. The latter were undoubtedly uncompromising Judaisers, and refused in this respect to concede any liberty to Gentile converts. They did not allow the apostleship of St. Paul, and, of course, rejected his teaching. They acknowledged the Messiahship of Jesus but rejected His Divinity, regarding him as a mere man, while they seem to have differed among themselves with regard to His miraculous conception, which some acknowledged, while others supposed Him to have been born of human parents in the ordinary way. There seems to be some doubt with regard to the numbers of this sect, and also with regard to its origin, some tracing it to Ebion their supposed founder, while others, deriving its name from a Hebrew word Ebion, signifying poor, consider that the name Ebionite was bestowed upon them on account of the poverty of their religious tenets.

Somewhat similar views, though possibly with a larger admixture of Gnostic opinions, seem to have been held by Cerinthus towards the close of the first century. He appears to have come in contact with the apostle St. John at Ephesus, and the latter is supposed to have especially written



His gospel in order to dispel the false notions of Cerinthus and his followers. It might thus seem at first sight that humanitarian views were prevalent among certain sects during the first century. On the other hand it has been maintained that such opinions were first broached by Theodotus and Artemon, more than a century later. The seeming contradiction in these statements may perhaps be partly removed by a consideration of the peculiar nature of the heresies of the first century, and this subject has been very fully discussed by Dr. Burton in his Bampton Lectures, to which reference has already been made.

He considers that all the heresies of the first age may be included under the comprehensive term of Gnosticism. This name does not denote a corrupt form of Christianity, for such a thing did not then exist, but rather an eclectic system derived partly from the Jewish Cabala, partly from the Persian dualism, but most of all from the philosophy of Plato, which had admitted some Christian elements into its strange heterogeneous content. It was above all things an attempt to explain the origin and existence of evil, and it attempted to solve this difficult problem by the introduction of æons or angels, sprung from, yet

separate from, the supreme God, by which the universe was created, and through whose agency it was sustained and preserved. No doubt the Gnostics considered that by thus removing God from all immediate contact with matter, which they regarded as the one great source of all evil and impurity, they had advanced a step in the explanation of a mystery which they had really only removed a stage farther back. One of these æons whom they called the Demiurge had created the world, without the knowledge of the supreme God, and as he was an imperfect Being, his defects were reflected in his handiwork. It was he who gave to the Jews their imperfect law, and not only was he responsible for the blemishes in the Old Testament dispensation, but he had endeavoured to conceal from men the knowledge of the one true God, and to gain for himself the homage and worship that of right belonged to another. It was the work of the æon Christ to restore to men the knowledge of the good God and heavenly Father, and for this purpose he chose the Person of Jesus as the vehicle by which He might convey this knowledge to men. With regard to the Person of Jesus the Gnostics seem to have held various opinions. Some influenced by Oriental mysticism

maintained that His body was a mere phantom or appearance, having no real substantial existence. Those who advocated such views were called the Docetæ. Others, among whom were the Ebionites and Judaisers, held that he was a man born of human parents. Both parties drew a sharp line of distinction between Jesus and the æon Christ and maintained that the latter first took possession of the former at His baptism in the river Jordan and left Him again before His passion, so that it was not the Christ that was crucified, but either a mere phantom or else the man Jesus. We can thus see that even those Gnostics, such as the Ebionites, who regarded Jesus as a mere man, yet admitted in some sense at all events the Divinity of Christ, were far enough removed in their tenets from the humanitarian views of the Unitarians, who claimed them as their forerunners.

As Dr. Burton has pointed out, the great value of a knowledge of Gnosticism is that it clearly proves that the whole tendency of early heresies was in the direction of a denial, not of the divinity, but of the humanity of the Christ, whatever view may have been taken of the Person of Jesus, and in the face of this tendency we are fully justified in holding that there must have been some ground for

the view which they put forward, even if they distorted it, of the Person of Christ. In other words, Gnosticism would have found nothing which it could borrow from in a humanitarian Christology, and the existence of that sect, much more their vast extent and influence, are a striking witness to the fact that the early Christian Church believed in the Divinity of its Founder. It may thus be quite true that, while Cerinthus and the Ebionites held humanitarian notions concerning the Person of Jesus, Theodotus and Artemon were the first heretics who denied the Divinity of Christ. If this view of the belief of the primitive Church be accepted, Priestley's theory, that Christian dogma originated in the influence of the Platonic philosophy upon the faith of the early Church, falls at once to the ground. Yet Dr. Burton admits this element of truth in his contention, namely, that the terms in which Christian doctrine found its expression were borrowed from a foreign source, and instances the words *Pleroma* and *Logos*, which, in the sense in which they are used in the New Testament, are taken, the one from Gnosticism, and the other from Platonic thought, though even in those cases there is an essential difference in the ideas which they denote. Burton, too, re-

jects such extravagant theories as those which would find the origin of the Platonic philosophy in ideas taken from the books of Moses. He contends, however, that the introduction of a new term by which an old idea is more clearly expressed, and by which it is able more easily to find a home among people living in a different intellectual environment, does not mark any change in the original idea itself. Thus the Hindoo word "Ashtar" signifies an incarnation, and is used with regard to the incarnations of Vishnu. If then a Christian missionary wished to commend his teaching to a native of India he might speak of the Ashtar of Christ, using a word which was familiar to his hearer, though no doubt he might give it a fuller and deeper meaning than it had hitherto possessed. Similarly, St. John in Ephesus, in the midst of a Greek community, would borrow their terms and modes of speech in order to translate into their intellectual hemisphere truths which could not in any other manner be brought home so fully to their minds and consciences.

Horsley agrees with Priestley in finding traces of a Trinity in the Platonic philosophy, but he thinks it is also possible to find the germs of it in many ancient systems of religion and philosophy,

and that this phenomenon can be discerned at a very early date. This fact, he thinks, cannot be explained by any mere coincidence, and, after the fashion of his time, he is inclined to think it formed portion of some original revelation given to mankind. It is perhaps questionable whether we are justified in attaching so much importance to this fact, which, no doubt, is a very striking one. If, however, it possesses a religious significance, it would be more in harmony with modern views to see in it another proof of the education of the human race by the Divine Logos, and of the reality of that "Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world".

Horsley combats Priestley's third assertion with regard to the Arianism of even the later Ante-Nicene Fathers, and exposes the fallacies and mis-translations by which that writer endeavours to support his proposition. Indeed, this work had been already accomplished, and the orthodoxy of those writers placed on a sure foundation in the great work of Bull. Burton, too, in his *Testimonies of the Ante-Nicene Fathers* discusses the question, and having pointed out the peculiar nature of Arianism, and its difference from modern Socinianism, or humanitarianism, justly observes that "If we can

show that the Ante-Nicene Fathers believed Jesus Christ to have been begotten of the substance of the Father, and to have existed from all eternity, the leading tenets of the Arians are overthrown".<sup>1</sup> He then refers to a number of passages from these writers, in which he shows it to be fully proved beyond doubt that they held both these beliefs with the utmost firmness.

Horsley had shown that Arianism and the whole notion of a created Logos was utterly foreign to Platonic modes of thought. Nevertheless, the connection between them was maintained by such writers as Burton, Mosheim, and Neander, and Newman's treatise on *The Arians* seems to have been written mainly with a view of refuting this calumny. He maintains that this heresy had its origin in the Churches of Syria and Asia Minor, of which Antioch was the metropolis, and traces its source in the method of exegesis adopted in those Churches. "The history of that school," he says, "is summed up in the broad characteristic fact, on the one hand, that it devoted itself to the literal and critical interpretation of Scripture, and, on the other, that it gave rise first to the Arian and then to the Nestorian heresy."<sup>2</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> *Testimonies*, p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> *Arians*, p. 404.



also considers that the Judaisers indirectly opened the way for this form of belief, and sees in the Cerinthians, the Ebionites, and the Nazarenes, the forerunners of Arius and his followers. On the other hand he claims to have shown "that though the heresy openly commenced, it but accidentally commenced in Alexandria, that no Alexandrian of name advocated it, and that, on its appearance, it was forthwith expelled from the Alexandrian Church, together with its author; next, that even granting Platonism originated it, of which there is no proof, still there are no grounds for implicating the Alexandrian Fathers in its formation; that while the old Platonism, which they did favour, had no part in the origination of the Arian doctrine, the new Platonism or eclecticism, which may be conceived to have Arianised, received no countenance from them; . . . that five Fathers, who have more especially incurred the charge of philosophising in their creed, belong to the schools of Rome and Antioch, as well as of Alexandria, and that the most unguarded speculator in the Alexandrian, Origen, is the very writer first to detect for us and to denounce the Arian tenet, at least sixty years before it openly presented itself to the world."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arians*, p. 130.

Even this slight and fragmentary sketch will enable us to understand to some extent the nature of the great historical argument for the Divinity of our Lord, as it was presented by apologists in the early days of the Unitarian controversy. It is not necessary for me now to discuss at any great length its merits or defects, for they are those of the contemporary evidential school, which I have already criticised in an earlier lecture. However, I must be allowed to repeat my conviction that this line of argument laid a strong foundation for the great Christian dogma, which though often ignored by writers of a later school, no doubt exercised even in their case a powerful, though unconscious, influence upon their convictions. We can easily understand its force by considering, if it were wholly absent, how insecure and unstable all other arguments would be when wanting its support. Its place in the chain of Christian evidences is admirably discussed by Bishop Gore in his Bampton Lectures on the *Incarnation of the Son of God*, and I quote his excellent summary: "We have traced up the evidence of our faith along three chief lines: we have examined the testimony of St. John, we have scrutinised the earliest evangelical narratives which certainly

reproduce for us the Apostolic teaching, and we have investigated the belief of the earliest Churches under the guidance of St. Paul. The result of our inquiry is that we are able to repudiate as unhistorical the notion of a naturalistic Christ hidden behind the miraculous Christ, the incarnate Son of God, of the Church's belief. Historical evidence, let me repeat, cannot create faith, but it can, and it does, satisfy it where it exists, and rationally justify the venture that it makes. In a word, it is those who deny and not those who affirm the traditional belief who do violence to the evidence."<sup>1</sup>

And yet, as in the case of the evidential school, it is easy to point out the defects in this line of reasoning. The Christ to which it leads us is the Christ of dogma, not the Christ of history. He is not the living person whose picture is portrayed for us in the gospels, but a metaphysical abstraction, and, like all such abstractions, arid and barren. He awakens no sympathy, he inspires no sacrifice. Whole lines of argument full of spiritual strength and beauty were unknown to the apologists of that age, and had to be developed by those of a later generation. "It was, in-

<sup>1</sup> P. 73.

deed," says Professor Fairbairn,<sup>1</sup> "a strange and significant thing: so much speculation about Christ, so little earnest inquiry into His actual mind; so much knowledge of what the creeds or confessions, the liturgies or psalmodies of the Church said; so little knowledge of the historical person or construction of the original documents as sources of real and actual history." It was still, too, the age of merely textual criticism, and those powerful lines of argument based upon the connection between the dogma concerning, and the character and claims of, Christ, or on the relation between the incarnation and human thought and life were very imperfectly, if at all, apprehended. The incarnation itself was too exclusively viewed as necessitated by the requirements of the atonement, and this view of that doctrine was very ably expressed by Horsley in his sermon on the "Incarnation".

We must, however, say a few words about the controversy on the subject of the atonement, which is briefly summarised for us in the famous discourses of Archbishop Magee. The subjects of which they treat are respectively, "The Scriptural doctrine of atonement" and "The Scriptural

<sup>1</sup> *Christ in Modern Theology*, p. 17.

doctrine of sacrifice". In their main contentions they bear a marked resemblance to the well-known chapter in Butler's *Analogy*, of which they may be viewed as expansions. This is, of course, especially noticeable in the earlier part of the first discourse, in which the objections of the deist are dealt with, the natural inefficacy of repentance to remove the effects of past transgressions is appealed to as a fact of our experience, and the circuitous apparatus of redemption is shown to be in harmony with the general scheme of God's Providence. As an inducement, also, to repentance what could be more suitable than "the sacrifice of the Son of God, for the sins of men; proclaiming to the world, by the greatness of the ransom, the immensity of the guilt, and thence at the same time evincing, in the most fearful manner, God's utter abhorrence of sin, in requiring such expiation; and the infinity of His love in appointing it".

The archbishop next discusses the case of those who, while willing in some sort to allow the doctrine of mediation, would endeavour to substitute the idea of mediation through obedience and intercession, for that of mediation through sacrifice. He shows that the difficulties urged against the latter scheme apply equally to the former, and

that the main one, that of teaching a doctrine of the Divine implacability, so far from being based upon, is totally at variance with, the teaching of Scripture. He admits that we cannot tell in what manner the sacrifice of Christ is connected with the forgiveness of sins, but neither could we understand in what way any other system of mediation would be effective with God for the pardon of another's transgressions.

Magee then proceeds from these general considerations to questions of textual criticism. He discusses the Biblical meaning of the term reconciliation, and adduces texts with the object of showing that the death of Christ was of the nature of a real propitiatory sacrifice. The Socinians had supposed the notion to be based on false and fanciful resemblances supposed to exist between it and the Mosaic sacrifices, while they somewhat inconsistently maintained that the latter were not expiatory. This last theory was, however, fully refuted by the account given of the Mosaic ordinances in the Book of Leviticus, while the prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices throughout the whole Gentile world would seem to indicate that the institution was the result of an original Divine appointment. It need, however, scarcely be

remarked that recent researches have not tended to confirm this theory of the origin of sacrifice. At the conclusion of the first discourse its main contentions are summed up and recapitulated, and it is pointed out that the essential distinction in the case of the sacrifice of Christ is that in it He is at one and the same time both the Priest who offers the sacrifice, and the Victim who is offered up for a sacrifice. He is thus both an intercessor and a propitiation, and thus the Catholic theory of the atonement includes all which is contained in other views upon this subject, but adds to them something more, the idea of a great offering for sin and transgression. This last is the root of the great Christian virtue of humility, and all theories of the Atonement which omit it really have their origin in false notions concerning the value of human merit, which "would rob us of that humble feeling of our own insufficiency which alone can give us an ardent and animating faith in the death and merits of our blessed Redeemer."

At the beginning of the second discourse, which refers more especially to the doctrine of sacrifice, it is maintained that the true course to be followed in order to understand the meaning of the Jewish



sacrifices, is to study them through the light shed upon them by the sacrifice of Christ. When the opposite method is pursued, the Divine origin of the rite is denied, it is attributed to superstition, and regarded as a wholly human invention, and the notion of the propitiatory sacrifice in the case of our Lord is in like manner treated as a delusion. In opposition to such views of the origin of the rite our author urges its universality of practice, the sameness of notion concerning its efficacy, and its apparent unreasonableness for the end which it was designed to accomplish. In the teaching of Scripture, too, the sacrifices of the law are frequently spoken of in connection with, and as preparatory to, the one great sacrifice of our great High Priest.

Magee then proceeds to develop his own theory of sacrifice which he traces back to the period of the fall, and supposes that it was at that time instituted by God Himself as a means to perpetuate among men the assurance of a coming Deliverer, and of foreshadowing the death of the Redeemer. Of course speculations of this nature leave themselves open to criticism from the historical standpoint, before which they are bound to justify themselves. The Divine origin of sacrifice, in the

sense in which it is maintained by Magee, had already been questioned by Warburton and was soon afterwards assailed by Davison; and their criticisms have as a rule been accepted by modern scholars. Happily in this case, as in so many others, our belief in the Divine education of the human race supplies all that we need, and is free from the many difficulties involved in the literal notion of a primitive revelation. Naturally, the historical disquisition upon the origin of sacrifice is of less value than the philosophical considerations upon the principle of mediation, and to this defect we may principally attribute the fact that Magee's work is not now so much prized as it formerly was. Having briefly traced the history of the ordinance in patriarchal times, he next passes to the consideration of the institution as it was established by the Mosaic Law. And here we find the connection between animal sacrifice and atonement, or reconciliation with God, clearly and distinctly announced. Thus we meet with the declaration: "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make atonement for the Soul". "And," asks our author, "in what conceivable light can we view this institution, but in relation to that great sacri-

fice, which was to make atonement for sins—to that blood of sprinkling which was to speak better things than that of Abel, or of the law?” The sacrifices of the law can only be viewed as a sacramental memorial, showing forth the Lord’s death until He came, even as the law itself was but a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. But of all those sacrifices there was one especially which seems to have had this figurative meaning, that offered by the High Priest on the great day of atonement. In it, especially in the ceremony in which the priest confessed the iniquities of the people, laying at the same time both his hands upon the head of the scapegoat, we see clearly the appearance of a vicarious element in the Mosaic sacrifices. And if this be so, surely we must recognise the same attribute in that great sacrifice of which the ceremonies of even the great day of atonement itself were but a type and figure.

Such, in brief, is the substance of Magee’s argument, and I have already shown wherein consisted both its force and its defects. There was, however, one radical fault in the treatment of the doctrine of the atonement by the theologians of that age, which, indeed, is found too often in the popular preaching

of that great truth even now. It seemed to be the aim of divines to isolate this one dogma, and to view it as if it stood alone, whereas it is but one member of the great body of Christian dogmatic truth, and can only be rightly understood when viewed in the light of the incarnation, and when seen in connection with other aspects of the life and work of the Redeemer. When regarded from that standpoint, the objections of the Socinian are seen to be futile, and the dogma itself becomes a life-giving truth full of power and beauty. No doubt the work of Magee was a powerful answer to the objectors of his day. He met them with their own weapons and on their own ground, and showed conclusively that the great doctrine of a propitiatory sacrifice for the remission of sins was in harmony both with God's general government of the universe, and with the teaching of Scripture. But it was reserved for later teachers to show that the sacrifice of Christ had a still higher meaning; for we can now find in it the true source of all real genuine self-sacrifice, the model and pattern of self-denial and unselfishness; we can look to it, not merely for pardon and peace, but for a gift of righteousness; for the energy of a new life and the sustaining power of a Divine assistance; for the

presence with us of a Divine Spirit and Person ;  
for that sacrifice was not merely the assurance of  
Divine forgiveness, but contained in its bosom the  
seed which was to blossom forth in a regenerated  
and purified humanity.

## LECTURE VIII.

### THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY (II.)

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Ephesians iv. 13).

WE have already on more than one occasion in the preceding lectures drawn attention to the fundamental differences which separated the theology of the nineteenth century from that of the preceding age, and to the distinctive features by which it was especially characterised. We have seen that they sprang from the new and more spiritual interpretation of Nature, and of humanity, which was the result of the transcendental movement in philosophy and literature, and of the re-action against the prosaic common-sense view of the universe, which was almost universal throughout the whole course of the eighteenth century.

There was, however, another subject the study of which was profoundly affected by the movement to which we have referred, I mean that of the past history of mankind. It was, indeed, in the eighteenth century that the scientific study

of history, as distinguished from the bald annals of the mere chronicler, first found a place in our literature, which in that epoch was adorned by such monumental works as those of Hume, and Robertson, and Gibbon. The two most distinguished members of this triumvirate we have already had occasion to refer to in connection with their attitude towards the Christian revelation, and they all seem to have been thoroughly imbued with the philosophical spirit of their age. They watched the course of history from the position of spectators, were attracted by its external aspects, and traced the origin of great movements to circumstances of environment and mechanical sequences, while they were blind to those deeper springs of life and action which lay hidden beneath the surface of things. The results of their labours are thus summed up by so sympathetic a critic as Sir Leslie Stephen: "The histories of Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, the great triumvirate of the day, have a common weakness, though Gibbon's profound knowledge has enabled his great work to survive the more flimsy productions of his colleagues. The fault, briefly stated, seems to be an incapacity to recognise the great forces by which history is moulded, and the con-



tinuity which gives it a real unity. We have but a superficial view; a superficiality, in the case of Hume and Robertson, implying inadequate research, and both in their case and Gibbon's implying a complete acquiescence in the external aspect of events, and the accidental links of connection, without attempting to penetrate to the underlying and ultimately determining conditions."<sup>1</sup> And this same distinguished writer attributes the defects of these historians to their having taken as a basis for their researches the inadequate inductive philosophy of their day.

If Gibbon stands out prominently as the foremost historian of the older school of thinkers, the new school of philosophy no doubt found its most brilliant representative in the same department in Thomas Carlyle. Looking behind the veil, he finds in the universe, in Nature and in humanity, manifestations of the One Divine Spirit, but the supreme revelation of this spirit is given to us in the great man, the "Hero" who stands apart from his fellows and is a legitimate object of the admiration and reverence of mankind. Such were Mahomet and Luther, Cromwell and Mirabeau, and it is by the appearance of these at great

<sup>1</sup> *English Thought*, vol. i., p. 58.

crises that history is made, and epochs are formed. It is not necessary for us to discuss the question whether in this respect Carlyle's view of history was partial and one-sided, nor need we consider the much-controverted point of his ideal of a "Hero". We are only concerned with the fact that the new philosophy recognised other and more spiritual forces as factors in the development of humanity, and the formation of history, than had been discerned by the empirical science of the older school; that this view found a powerful exponent in Carlyle; and that it has been adopted, though no doubt in a qualified form, by more recent historians. History is not a chain of events bound together by accidental links, but is rather to be viewed as a progressive revelation of God, and education of the human race; and at each new step in advance is to be seen one of those great figures which have brought blessings to mankind, and shed a lustre on its chequered career.

It is not difficult to see what would be the result of the application of such a view of history to the greatest event which it has to record, the origins of Christianity. Gibbon had already approached that subject, and had laid great stress on several secondary causes in determining the success of

that religion. Among them he mentions the zeal of the adherents of the new faith and the purity of their morals. Such causes are, however, in need of an explanation themselves, and Gibbon does not attempt to account for the origin of this new spirit of self-sacrifice and austerity, arising as it did in the most degraded period of the world's history. Carlyle does not, indeed, give a full answer to the problem, but at all events he opens up a new field for consideration, when he recognises in the person of the "Divine man of Judæa" the highest symbol and manifestation of the Divine Spirit known among men. The rediscovery of, and the return to, the historical Christ, may indeed be regarded as the characteristic note of recent theology. In the earlier phases of the Unitarian controversy, the incarnation had been chiefly viewed as constituting a basis upon which to rear the superstructure of a theological system, and theologians were chiefly engaged in presenting Christ to the world as the Christ of dogma. It was reserved for a later generation to find in Him the living Being who is at one and the same time the supreme revelation of the Divine mind, the realisation of our ideal of humanity, and the great controlling and revivifying force in the history of mankind.

More and more indeed is it coming to be recognised that in the position occupied by this unique personality, and the relation in which He stands to mankind, consists the distinctive feature of our religion, and the cry "Back to Christ," embodies the instinctive yearnings of the Catholic Church throughout the world. We find that feeling expressed in Germany in the works of Neander and Ewald, of Schleiermacher and Keim, and in France in those of Lacordaire and Gratry, of Dupanloup and Didon, but nowhere has it been more fully manifested, as we shall see, than in the English theology of the last century. For men feel, to use the words of Bishop Gore, that "We need again and again to go back to the consideration of the historical Jesus. The dogmatic decisions of the Church Catholic afford us guidance and warning in the undertaking; they are notice-boards to warn us off false lines of approach to Him, but they are not, as has already been explained, meant to be anything more. To fill up the dogmatic outline into a living whole, to know the meaning of the Incarnation, and the conditions of the humanity of the Son of God, we must go back to scrutinise the figure in the Gospels."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Bampton Lectures*, p. 144.

Very remarkable, too, in this respect is the altered position of modern rationalism in its attempt to account for the origin of the Christian Faith. It can no longer, as in the days of Voltaire or Gibbon, afford to ignore or treat with contumely the Person and claims of its Founder. Even Strauss must pay his tribute to the power of his personal influence, but of course this feeling of homage, even to the king whom he seeks to dethrone, is most fully expressed in the well-known work of Renan. I quote his comment on the text St. John iv. 21, 23: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But . . . the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth". "The day when He pronounced this word He was truly Son of God. He spoke for the first time the sure word on which the edifice of eternal religion shall rest. He founded the pure worship, of no land, of no date, which all lofty souls will practise to the end of time.<sup>1</sup> His religion that day was not only the religion good for humanity, it was Absolute Religion: and if other planets have inhabitants endowed with reason and morality, their religion can be no other than that which

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Martineau, *Essays*, vol. iii., pp. 334, 335.

Jesus proclaimed at Jacob's well. Man has not been able to abide by it, for the idea is tenable but for an instant. The word of Jesus has been a gleam in a dark night; it has needed eighteen hundred years for the eyes of mankind (what do I say? of an infinitely small part of mankind) to accustom themselves to it. But the gleam will become the full day; and, after having run through the whole circle of errors, mankind will return to that word as the imperishable expression of its faith and its hopes." And in a somewhat similar strain Matthew Arnold writes:<sup>1</sup> "And this we say again is a signal witness to Christianity. Jesus Christ came to reveal what righteousness, to which the promises belong, really is; and so long as this, though shown by Jesus, is not recognised by us, we may call ourselves Christendom as much as we please, the true character of a Christendom will be wanting to us, because the great promises of prophecy will be still without their fulfilment. Nothing will do, except righteousness; and no other conception of righteousness will do, except Jesus Christ's conception of it:—His method, His secret, and His temper."

We have indicated Strauss' *Leben Jesu* as mark-

<sup>1</sup> In *Literature and Dogma*.

ing a new epoch, and as directing men's minds once more to the study of the Gospel record. Perhaps the ablest reply given in this country to its criticism was the work of that great scholar and philosopher, W. H. Mill, *Observations on Pantheistic Principles*. We may also refer to the well-known work of Archdeacon Wilberforce on the Incarnation, which, though dogmatic rather than apologetic in its contents, drew attention to several hitherto neglected consequences of that great truth, and marked an advance in theological study. The return to Christ as a living Person is however first distinctly noticeable in the works of the great American Unitarian, Channing, in whose writings He is presented to us as a figure full of life and spiritual beauty. Following in the footsteps of Channing, Horace Bushnell devoted a chapter of his book *Nature and the Supernatural*<sup>1</sup> to an able and searching analysis of the character of Jesus. Among later American writers who have chosen this theme we must not forget to mention the beautiful and suggestive Bohlen Lectures on *The Influence of Jesus*, by the greatest of the preachers of the New World, Bishop Phillips Brooks. At a somewhat earlier date a great Eng-

<sup>1</sup> Chapter x.



lish preacher, Robertson of Brighton, had been a leader of thought in the same direction in our own country. Such sermons as those upon "The Loneliness of Christ" and "The Sympathy of Christ" sounded a chord hitherto unheard in the religious world, and appealed to fresh feelings and emotions hitherto untouched, which were now to be enlisted on behalf of the Christian revelation. More distinctly apologetic was *The Christ of History*, by John Young, which was first published in 1857. The movement which we have here attempted briefly to describe reached its height both on the continent and in England in the years which immediately followed 1860, and was marked in our own country by the appearance in 1865 of a striking and original book, *Ecce Homo*. It was at first published anonymously, but was afterwards found to be the work of a well-known literary layman, Sir John Seeley.

It was now only needed that accredited Church teachers should make use of the new lines of defence which had thus been brought prominently forward on behalf of their faith. These new lines of argument had, indeed, been frequently mixed up with rash and unauthorised speculations, and had to a considerable extent become identified with

Socinian and Unitarian views. These were now to be found combined with the strictest orthodoxy, and the most unwavering adherence to the historic creeds of Christendom. This was notably the case in Liddon's Bampton Lectures delivered the year after the publication of *Ecce Homo*, which were a masterly defence of the great truth of the Divinity of our Lord. Quarter of a century later the present Bishop of Worcester<sup>1</sup> occupied a similar position, and his lectures on the *Incarnation of the Son of God* embody all that is best and most fruitful in modern thought upon that great theme.

It would be quite impossible even to mention in passing the names of the many writers of *Lives of Christ*, who have endeavoured in recent years to give us fresh presentments of the character and work of the Founder of our faith. Indirectly, indeed, almost every branch of our literature has been influenced by the attempt to reproduce as a living reality that central figure of the world's history, and to find in His teaching the solution of the problems both religious and social by which our age is perplexed. It will be sufficient for us briefly to indicate the main lines of apologetic thought

<sup>1</sup> Now Bishop of Birmingham.

which recent study has brought into prominence, and to show their bearing upon the great doctrine with which we are more immediately concerned, that of the Divinity of our Lord.

In approaching then the consideration of the work of Christ our attention is first arrested by the striking contrast between the magnitude of the task which He undertook, and the inadequacy of the means which He possessed to bring it to a successful issue. His early life was spent amidst humble surroundings in the small village of Nazareth, among a poor and despised people. He probably worked at the trade of a carpenter until He had passed the age of thirty. He had no period of study, no intellectual equipment to prepare Him for His public ministry; that ministry at most extended over a period of scarcely three years, and it was crowned by a painful death, which He endured as a common malefactor. His earthly surroundings and condition were such as to prejudice His countrymen against His claims, and the whole tone of His teaching was in direct opposition to their narrow Jewish prejudices. For that teaching was truly broad and catholic. It was concerned, not with the peculiar tenets of any sect or party, but with those great moral and

spiritual truths which are the grandest heritage of mankind. And in this department Christ stands absolutely alone, and is approached by no other. It will scarcely be seriously questioned that it was He who restored to men the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God, that it was He who first revealed to man the greatness and value of the human soul, that it was He who at one and the same time pierced to the inmost recesses of the human consciousness, disclosing the weakness and corruption of man's spiritual nature, and yet opened up a way of return for the soul to God, and inspired men's hearts and minds by the assurance of the possibilities of repentance and amendment, and the promise of forgiveness and restoration. It is only necessary to compare the teaching of Christ upon these momentous subjects with that of Buddha or Confucius, or with that of Socrates or Plato in order to perceive the great immeasurable difference by which His calm, clear, certain utterances are separated from those of even the world's greatest religious teachers. "Socrates and Plato," it has been said,<sup>1</sup> "astonish us by the utterance of imperishable and grand ideas; but they are not only few in number, they are unconnected. Christ

<sup>1</sup> Young, *The Christ of History*, p. 172.

offers to the world an extended and harmonious multitude of spiritual doctrines. He, too, is the only teacher who always speaks with certainty and precision. The disciples of Socrates were often left in deep perplexity by their master. . . . Not a shadow even of hesitation rests for a moment on His language. The conflict of other minds between faith and doubt He knew not ; but however high the subject and environed with difficulties, He spoke with absolute but meek assurance. Always and everywhere He spoke with absolute but meek assurance," and we feel constrained to ask, "Whence hath this Man His knowledge, whence His certainty, whence His assurance?"

But it is not only as a religious teacher that Jesus Christ is unique. It was He, too, who first formed the bold and original design of binding together His followers in one Divine society, the members of which should be connected by spiritual ties, and which should realise the kingdom of God on earth. If then we ask whether that plan has succeeded or what fruit it has borne through the ages, its results may be seen externally in the existence and history of the Catholic Church throughout the world, and internally in the matchless influence which Jesus Christ has exercised over

the hearts and souls of men. And of the greatness of the task thus undertaken, and the marvellous skill implied in its results, the author of *Ecce Homo* thus writes: "But the achievement of Christ, in founding by His single will and power a structure so durable and so universal, is like no other achievement which history records. The masterpieces of the men of action are coarse and common in comparison with it, and the masterpieces of speculation flimsy and insubstantial. When we speak of it the commonplaces of admiration fail us all together. Shall we speak of the originality of the design, of the skill displayed in the erection? All such terms are inadequate. Originality and contriving skill operated indeed, but as it were implicitly. The creative effort which produced that against which, it is said, the gates of hell shall not prevail, cannot be analysed. No architect's designs were furnished for the New Jerusalem, no committee drew up rules for the Universal Commonwealth. . . . No man saw the building of the New Jerusalem, the workmen crowded together, the unfinished walls and unpaved streets; no man heard the clink of trowel and pickaxe; it descended out of heaven from God."

It is, however, when we pass on from the consideration of the teaching and work of Christ to the study of His life and character, that we meet with what is the most unique and striking feature in the Christian revelation. And first we must direct our attention to the significant fact of the sinlessness of Christ. If this circumstance is most clearly brought before us in the fourth gospel by the challenge which our Lord gives to His adversaries, defying them to convict Him of sin, it is none the less implied in all the narratives which we possess of His life and history. Let us examine the picture of His childhood as it has been portrayed for us. Of it Horace Bushnell says: "We observe, then, as a first peculiarity at the root of His character, that He begins life with a perfect youth. His childhood is an unspotted, and withal a kind of celestial flower. The notion of a superhuman or celestial childhood, the most difficult of all things to be conceived, is yet successfully drawn by a few simple touches. He is announced beforehand as 'that Holy Thing,' a beautiful and powerful stroke to raise our expectation to the level of a nature so mysterious. In His childhood, everybody loves Him. Using words of external description, He is shown growing up in favour



with God and man, a Child so lovely and beautiful that heaven and earth appear to smile upon Him together. So, when it is added that the Child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and, more than all, that the grace or beautifying power of God was upon Him, we look as on the unfolding of a sacred flower, and seem to scent a fragrance wafted on us from other worlds."<sup>1</sup> And he goes on to remark that such a picture of a simple yet perfect childhood is unique, and is altogether wanting in the biographies of great human characters, which are generally an account, in their earlier stages, of the rectification of faults and the removal of distempers. For the general subject of the character of Christ the eloquent words of Channing will suffice: "The character of Christ has withstood the most deadly and irresistible foe of error and unfounded claims, I mean Time. It has lost nothing of its elevation by the improvements of ages. Since He appeared, society has gone forward, men's views have become enlarged, and philosophy has risen to conceptions of far purer virtues than were the boast of antiquity. But, however the human mind may have advanced, it must still look upward if it would see and un-

<sup>1</sup> *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 215.

derstand Christ. He is still above it. Nothing purer, nobler, has yet dawned on human thought. Then Christianity is true. . . . The character of Jesus was real; and, if so, Jesus must have been what He professed to be, the Son of God, and the Revealer of His mercy and His will to mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

It is indeed superfluous to pursue the subject any further, but there are no doubt some who, while quite willing to recognise in the character of Christ the pattern of moral excellence, yet refuse to admit His absolute sinlessness. Such persons, however, have to face the difficult dilemma of how it has come to pass that in the case of the highest and purest of all human beings, there seems to have been no sense of sin, no feeling of repentance, no acknowledgment of guilt. If, as we mark the ascent of the soul in piety and holiness, we invariably notice that the sense of sin is deepened and the experience of contrition is more marked, as witness such cases as those of Isaiah and St. Paul, how was it that in one instance only, and that the highest of all, such a feature should be wholly wanting in the spiritual life? The difficulty can, we believe, be only solved by the acknowledgment that in this instance we are face to face with a

<sup>1</sup> *Works*, p. 218.

unique fact, namely, the existence of a sinless human Being.

But we may further remark that the humanity of our Lord was not merely sinless, it was also perfect. For it is no mere negative type of goodness which He exhibits to us. Rather was His life the highest manifestation to us of active sympathy and benevolence, and was in this respect in complete harmony with, and the full realisation of, His own teaching. We see in Him the full perfection of human life in its various stages, childhood, youth, and manhood, and behold in Him the fulness of the Divine ideal of humanity never elsewhere realised. All true progress can only lead us to a more thorough knowledge of the perfect man, and enable us to attain more nearly to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

There is one other trait in the humanity which our Lord assumed which demands especial notice. I mean its universality. In all other men, even in the best and noblest specimens of the race, we notice the predominance of national characteristics, or individual peculiarities. In the greatest saints or the men of the most exalted piety, some special class of virtues is unduly cultivated, while others are neglected and passed by; there is devotion to

purity, and charity is forgotten; there is enthusiasm, but it is not tempered by forbearance, and a Christianity is exhibited to the world which is purely ascetic or wholly militant. But in the character of Christ, and in Him alone, do we find all the various virtues and graces which adorn humanity, blended together in exact and harmonious proportion; in Him courage is combined with tenderness, and the most uncompromising hatred of sin and vice, with the deepest love for, and sympathy with, those who were its victims. He truly is the catholic Man. Thus Robertson tells us: "There was in Him no national peculiarity or individual idiosyncrasy. He was not the son of the Jew, nor the son of the carpenter, nor the offspring of the modes of living and thinking of that particular century. He was the Son of Man. Once in the world's history was born a Man. Once in the roll of ages, out of innumerable failures, from the stock of human nature, one Bud developed itself into a faultless Flower. One perfect specimen of humanity has God exhibited on earth."<sup>1</sup> Or, to quote Professor Goldwin Smith, his character is, "the essence of man's moral nature, clothed with a personality so vivid and

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons, on Christ's Estimate of Sin.*

intense as to excite, through all ages, the most intense affection; yet divested of all those peculiar characteristics, the accidents of place and time, by which human personalities are marked".<sup>1</sup> "And," he adds, "what other notion than this, can philosophy form of Divinity manifest on earth?"

This fact of the universality of our Lord's manhood is one to which attention has frequently been directed by modern writers, and it is of considerable importance, in view of the claim of Christianity to be the Catholic religion. The ideals set up by other faiths, however noble or inspiring they may be, have something local or transitory about them. They are fitted for men at a certain stage of development, or amidst particular surroundings. In the progress of the race they gradually become antiquated, and are superseded by other views of the nature of God, and the duty of man. In the case of Christianity, on the contrary, is to be found a life and example fitted for all nations and every age; and the course of time, as it has discovered new human needs and yearnings, has only served to bring to light fresh capacities for their satisfaction in the Divine

<sup>1</sup> *On Some Supposed Consequences of the Doctrine of Historical Progress*, a lecture.

ideal revealed in that faith. In past ages "the versatility and intellect of the Greeks, the majestic discipline of the Romans, the strong individuality of the Teutons—each in turn has been able to find its true ideal in Jesus of Nazareth,"<sup>1</sup> while new virtues and fresh graces, hitherto but imperfectly perceived, were brought into the light and placed in their true position in the content of the Divine revelation. Nor need we believe that this moral and spiritual development of the content of that revelation is now closed. Rather may we trust that there is still a rich harvest in store for it, especially if in the providence of God our great Indian empire should be willing to accept the Gospel. In the East that Gospel had its birth, and in the East so fertile in great spiritual movements, and so devoted to the contemplation of unseen and eternal verities, it may be destined to reach the full measure of its development. Thus slowly yet surely will the one great ideal become the heritage of mankind. And indeed it could not well be otherwise. For it is not by those traits of character which men are quick to appreciate that Christ appeals to humanity. Just as our immediate enthusiasm is given to a work of art

<sup>1</sup> Gore's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 169.

which is good in its kind, but still only second-rate, because it appeals to some special individual susceptibility, while at first we render, it may be, only a cold homage to the grandest productions of the great masters, a homage which only constant study will change into unbounded admiration, so it is with the Christ. Only the man who "will do His will" can truly understand His doctrine, only he who will follow His footsteps can appreciate His character, and find in that teaching and character his stay and support through all the days, and amid the manifold changes of this mortal life.

But it will perhaps be asked, Can we not rest in the revelation of such a perfect humanity as the ultimate fact for the Christian consciousness? Is not the sweet Galilean vision of the Great Teacher, so noble and commanding, yet withal so tender and sympathetic, sufficient for us? What need for dogmas concerning the nature of the Founder of our religion, when we all admit His unique and adorable personality? To those who would reason thus one question must be addressed: "Is there not just one flaw in that perfect vision, one discord in the otherwise perfect harmony which pervades the Christ of the Gospels, I mean the note of



arrogance, of self-assumption, a want with regard, strange to say, to the thoroughly Christian virtue of humility, the enunciation of claims which seem intolerable coming from any mere man, be He even the highest and holiest of the race?" For how is it that Christ speaks? "To humanity struggling with its passions and its destiny He says, Cling to Me, cling ever closer to Me. If we believe St. John, He represented Himself as the Light of the World, as the Shepherd of the Souls of men, as the Way to Immortality, as the Vine or Life-tree to Humanity. And if we refuse to believe that He used those words, we cannot deny, without rejecting all the evidence before us, that He used words which have substantially the same meaning. We cannot deny that He commanded men to leave everything and attach themselves to Him; that He declared Himself King, Master, and Judge of men; that He promised to give rest to all the weary and heavy-laden; that He instructed His followers to hope for life from feeding on His body and blood".<sup>1</sup>

Such is the statement of the claims of Christ as made by the author of *Ecce Homo*, and surely they far surpass those of any other religious teacher

<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Homo*, pp. 176, 177.

whom the world has ever seen. We are thus bound to consider their full significance, and their bearing upon that conception of the Founder of our religion, which would represent Him as the noblest flower and crown of our race, while denying to Him any higher position in the scale of Being. We must face the great problem of how to reconcile such stupendous assumptions with such virtues as sincerity, unselfishness, and humility. We can not explain them even by the wildest flights of Oriental hyperbole; the whole teaching and life of Him who uttered them repudiates the notion of enthusiasm or fanaticism. More and more, as we study the pages of the Gospel, do we feel the inconsistency of the Unitarian position, the difficulty of recognising with Renan in the Christ there displayed to us a Being who was the moral chief of humanity, but nothing further. And if we once admit that He was more than man, can we stop short of an acknowledgment of His Divinity, nay, of His Deity? Such an acknowledgment seems to be forced upon us, not merely by those great texts and utterances of His in which He claims absolute unity, and co-equality with God the Father. It is implied in His tremendous claims to judge the world, and to

have pre-existed through an unlimited past. To think otherwise would be to introduce some vague intermediate being, more than human, yet less than Divine, like the Arians of old, who should attract to himself the love and veneration which is due to God alone, and direct the homage and adoration due to the Creator to one of His Creatures. Such a view of Christ is repugnant to the feeling and thought of our own day, and would meet with but scant support in any quarter of the religious world.

We are thus brought face to face with the terrible alternative that Christ was "Aut Deus aut homo non bonus". And I believe that it will not be so difficult for us to make our choice. For to use the words of Liddon: "It is easier for a good man to believe, that in a world where he is encompassed by mysteries, where his own being itself is a consummate mystery, the Moral Author of the wonders around him should for great moral purposes have taken to Himself a created form, than that the one Human Life which realises the idea of humanity, the one Man who is at once perfect strength and perfect tenderness, the one Pattern of our race in whom its virtues are combined, and from whom its vices are eliminated,

should have been guilty, when speaking about Himself, of an arrogance, of a self-seeking, and of an insincerity which, if admitted, must justly degrade Him far below the moral level of millions among His unhonoured worshippers.”<sup>1</sup>

We thus are led on step by step from the acknowledgment of the perfect Humanity of Jesus Christ to the confession of the great truth as set forth in the Nicene Creed that He is indeed “Very God of Very God,” and we find the verification of this great doctrine, when held as the foundation of the Christian faith, in the fresh light which it throws upon the nature of God, in its revelation to us of the possibilities and the destiny of man, and in the harmony and proportion which it gives to the various statements of the Christian creed. The subject is indeed a large and important one, and with a few words upon it we will bring this lecture to a close. And, first, the incarnation is the highest and crowning revelation of the nature and personality of God. It is surely unnecessary for us to dwell upon a point which is so obvious, and to which reference has already been made in these lectures. But it is necessary at a time when we often hear Unitarianism spoken of as

<sup>1</sup> *Bampton Lectures*, p. 207.

an advance upon the theology of the Catholic Church, to emphasise the fact that an abandonment of the great truth of the incarnation, our rich heritage from the past, is a distinct retrogression. For no divinely-inspired teacher, however lofty his message, can really reveal to us the mind and heart of God. Amidst the ills of life, and in view of that terrible aggregate, the sin and the suffering of the world, only such a stupendous fact as a Divine incarnation, with all that it implies of transcendent self-sacrifice and measureless love, can assure us that there is an Infinite Will to aid our weakness, and a more than human pity to commiserate our woes.

But it is not alone on the greatest of all facts, the Being of God Himself, that the incarnation throws light; it illumines also the various truths of Christian dogma, and the difficulties which attach to some of them disappear when they are viewed from a new prospect. This is especially the case with the atonement. As that doctrine is sometimes stated, it no doubt seems a harsh and arbitrary transaction. It is only in view of the Divine nature of the sufferer on Calvary that we can understand the real value of the sacrifice there offered up, and see in it the manifestation of the

love of the Father who sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins. The sacraments, too, are no longer mere graceful rites, but must be viewed as extensions of the incarnation, designed as gracious channels, whereby we may each one of us become partakers of the Divine humanity of the risen and ascended Lord.

Lastly, this consideration brings us to one more aspect of the incarnation, namely, that it is the great source of the purification and regeneration of humanity. Side by side with the great heathen virtues of courage and generosity and patriotism, which, alas! when they stood alone too often proved a curse and not a blessing to their possessors, there blossomed forth, as the fruits of the incarnation, the milder Christian graces of purity and humility, and love. It is true that other influences have combined with Christianity in making the modern world what it is; we are willing to admit to the full the claims of civilisation, and too often the mistaken adherents of Christianity have striven to hinder the cause of progress; yet for the renewal of man's personal life, for the controlling of his passions, for the development of his whole spiritual nature, Christianity remains the only power known to us. And when we view the re-

sults, either direct or indirect, of the life and work of Christ, both upon the individual and upon society, what a vast panorama is opened out before us! We see literature and art assume new and higher forms, we behold social reforms on the most gigantic scale, slavery abolished, the dignity of labour asserted, the horrors of war mitigated, the rise of a new spirit of philanthropy, the appearance of the Lazar-house and the hospital. But it is when we pass within the veil to the inmost sanctuary that we are most conscious of the power of our risen Lord. There we behold "the saints of God," and "the noble army of martyrs," who, living ever in a Divine presence, brought to bear upon those around them, and manifested to their fellows, graces and virtues of which the world knew not, but which grew and were nurtured in a heavenly soil. Truly, when we see such things, we may exclaim: "Galilean, thou hast conquered," and must acknowledge that "a pierced hand still rules the world and directs the course of the ages".



## LECTURE IX.

### THE VIRGIN BIRTH AND MODERN THOUGHT

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law (Galatians iv. 4).

IN the preceding lectures we have sketched the course of English Christological thought down to the closing years of the last century, and completed our historical survey of the Unitarian controversy. Within the last few years, however, the humanitarian position has undergone very considerable modifications, owing to fresh influences, chiefly of a philosophical nature, which have profoundly influenced recent theological speculations, and altered alike the nature of the attack upon, and the defence of, the central article of the Christian faith. A brief review, therefore, of the actual position, and the main lines occupied by the respective parties at the present time, will form an appropriate conclusion to our discussion of the various phases of English apologetic thought during the last two centuries.

No one, then, who takes the slightest interest in

theological questions, can fail to be struck by the important place occupied in recent controversies by discussions concerning the birth of our Lord from a virgin. It is in fact the leading topic in recent theological literature. At the same time, there can be little doubt that this particular question above all others cannot be viewed alone, or discussed, on its historical evidences. It must, on the other hand, be approached by each person from some theological or philosophical standpoint, which will to a very considerable extent determine the view which he takes of the amount of historical evidence required for the fact in question. And the pre-suppositions or presumptions with which he is already possessed will form the most important factor in determining his judgment on the one side or the other. I have already alluded to the influence exerted by pre-suppositions in influencing our opinions in matters of theology, especially in those pertaining to the doctrines of revealed religion, when discussing the position taken up on such questions by Newman; but the subject is of such importance that it requires to be more strongly emphasised in considering the bearings of recent controversies. For in our age men are more logical in their deduc-

tions, and more determined to draw inferences and extend the circle of results contained in any primary truth or idea. In theology, at all events, the day of compromise and of half-measures seems to be past, and those positions which afforded a refuge to vacillating intellects, and judgments in suspense, have lost their strength and power. On the general subject of the logic of the Christian position, and the spirit in which we must approach the consideration of Christian dogma, I quote the words of one of the most accomplished apologists of our day, Mr. Illingworth. In his work on *Reason and Revelation* he writes: "We will now turn to the central doctrine of Christianity, the belief that Jesus Christ was God incarnate; not with a view of repeating the evidence for it, which has been so long before the world, but simply to see what the Christian attitude towards that evidence is; how the Christian approaches it, and why he considers it as cogent, in the light of modern thought, as in bygone ages—the logic, in short, of the Christian position. The evidence, of course, is complex, cumulative, convergent; but an important factor in it is the gospel history, and we will begin by isolating that. It is not an uncommon opinion that the Christian reads the

gospel history in the light of various assumptions, while his critical opponent puts such assumptions aside, and confines himself to the bare facts of the case. But it will be obvious after what we have been saying that this is untrue. For it is impossible to approach any complex problem without pre-suppositions; and doubly so a problem that not only involves physical, moral, and spiritual elements all combined, but is also of supreme personal interest, of one kind or another, to all who approach it, and touches human nature to the quick. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the controversies waged over the gospel history are entirely concerned with the pre-suppositions of the respective combatants. The gospels, considered as documents that have come down to us, are the same facts for all alike. It is over their interpretation that issue is joined, and this interpretation is determined by our pre-suppositions.”<sup>1</sup>

We, then, approach the subject of the virgin birth of our Lord with the pre-supposition of the truth of His Divinity, having been convinced of the reality of the latter from such considerations as those which have been brought forward in support of it in our last two lectures; and we may say

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 88, 89.

that the chief ground for our accepting the miracle is "that believing in the personal, indissoluble union between God and man in Jesus Christ, the miraculous birth of Jesus seems to us the only fitting accompaniment of this union, and, so to speak, the natural expression of it in the order of outward facts."<sup>1</sup>

The course of the Socinian controversy will afford an admirable illustration of the preceding remarks. Socinus himself and his immediate followers, living in an age when the authority of the Bible was undisputed, strongly maintained the miraculous birth and other supernatural accompaniments of our Lord's life, and of course a similar view was held by those English theologians who had leanings towards Arianism. But the case was different with Priestley and his school. Without discarding altogether the authority of the Scriptures on the subject of miracles, they revived the notion of some of the early heretics that the opening chapters of the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke, which contain the narrative of the birth of our Lord, were interpellations added to the original form of those books. No doubt, there was considerable difference of opinion among their

<sup>1</sup> Stanton, *The Jewish and the Christian Messiah*, p. 376.

followers upon the subject, and the writings of Channing are an example of that position of compromise upon such subjects to which reference has already been made. Such a position, however, could not long be maintained, especially in view of the modern critical movement, which struck at the root of all merely mechanical theories of inspiration or of Scripture authority. The result of this movement upon Unitarian thought is very noticeable in the case of Dr. Martineau, and his influence has been paramount among the members of the sect of whom he has been the most illustrious ornament. Rejecting all external authority such as that of the Bible or the Church in matters of religion, he adopted almost in its entirety the mythical theory of Strauss and the German rationalists. His view of the Person of Christ is thoroughly humanitarian, and he divests the narrative in the gospels of every vestige of the supernatural, relegating of course to the region of myth and cloudland the account of His miraculous conception.

There is, however, happily another side to the humanitârian controversy, and it is connected with such great names as those of Coleridge, and Maurice, and Hutton. Forced to abandon the unsatisfying

creed of Priestley and the Socinians, they did not seek refuge, like Dr. Martineau, in the intuitional assurances of conscience, but based their faith on a broader basis, in which Church and Bible and conscience alike had a part, and in which miracles which seemed improbable, or shall we say even unnecessary, when viewed as the credentials of a merely human teacher, who spoke but as one of the prophets, were shown to be the fitting and harmonious accompaniment of the work of one who was none other than the Incarnate Word of God. I need only refer to a well-known essay by Hutton on *The Incarnation and Principles of Evidence* as exhibiting the many-sidedness of that great truth, the broad basis on which it rests, and the important consequences which result from its acceptance.

Such were the familiar pre-suppositions with which theologians approached the subject of Christian dogma, and the question of miracles. They were interwoven the one with the other, and seemed to stand or fall together. The issue thus raised was clear and definite. But within the last few years a change has taken place in the phraseology, at all events, of those who impugn the supernatural element in the Christian revela-



tion. They no longer deny the Divinity of our Lord; the incarnation is, they declare, the central tenet of their religion, and they use language, in speaking of it, which approximates very closely to, if it is not absolutely identical with, that which has been sanctioned by the immemorial usage of Christendom. At the same time the miraculous element and especially the virgin birth of our Lord, is openly denied, or, if it is feared that such a denial should give offence in certain quarters, it is ignored, and treated as an open question of no great importance.

Of course theologians were not slow to take up the defence of the position thus assailed, and several treatises were written defending the miracle of the incarnation. But at first they confined themselves chiefly to a discussion of the questions raised by the historical evidences, and it is only quite recently that they have endeavoured to trace the new movement to its root in the peculiar view of the incarnation taken by its advocates. As far as I am aware, no attempt has been made to trace its connection with the modern form of idealism to which I have referred in an earlier lecture, and yet I have no doubt that the germs of it are to be found in the teaching of that philosophy and in

the great influence exerted by its leading exponent, Green, upon the thought of his age. Another leading member of that school, Professor Caird, now Master of Balliol College, has endeavoured in his Gifford Lectures on the *Evolution of Religion* to explain the rise of Christianity through the application of principles derived from that philosophy, and as the book is regarded by many as the ablest enunciation of the views of such a dominant form of thought in matters of the kind, a few words about the method followed in it will not be out of place.

In the *Evolution of Religion* Professor Caird notes three main stages. In the first of these the religious consciousness is mainly objective, and centres chiefly on external objects of devotion and worship. Such was the early religion of India, or the classical religion of Greece. In the second stage, on the contrary, it is mainly subjective, and our view of God, and even of external Nature, is determined by a form of self-consciousness. God is chiefly revealed to man in the inner voice of conscience, in the categoric imperative of duty. This second stage often follows as a sort of reaction after the earlier phase of merely objective religion. Thus the objective worship of the Vedas

and earlier forms of Indian religion gave way to the subjective creed of Buddhism, and classical heathenism was succeeded by such an introspective form of philosophy as Stoicism.

The opposition, however, between the subject and object which lies at the root of all conscious existence implies, not only an opposition, but also a relation between these forms of thought. We thus rise to the idea of a unity which transcends and underlies their division, and in which they both are comprehended. And this idea, which is the pre-supposition of all existence, is the true form of the idea of God. For we must conceive of God as immanent in all things, and regard Him as "at once the source, the sustaining power, and the end of our spiritual lives". This is the third and last stage in the evolution of religion and is specially identified by Professor Caird with Christianity, for, although adumbrations of it are to be found in Indian Pantheism, and in Greek philosophy, they are disfigured by materialistic conceptions, and the great truth which underlies them has found at best an imperfect expression. But in the teaching of Jesus, and in the attitude which He assumes both towards humanity and the world of Nature we find the full and perfect ex-

pression of this, the last and highest idea of God. He regards the Divine Spirit "as revealing itself in the upward process of Nature to humanity, as well as in the further process whereby human life rises towards the attainment of its highest ideal".<sup>1</sup> Accordingly His teaching is in the highest sense optimistic. For it rests for its basis upon "the consciousness that good is omnipotent; that what the soul of man recognises as the highest ideal is at the same time the deepest reality of the world; and that man is not merely the creature but the son of God".<sup>2</sup> Even in things evil He could discern a soul of goodness, for all things in the end worked together for the production of the highest good, and the profound maxim "Die to Live" expresses the deepest thought of Jesus, while at the same time it transfigures the idea of sacrifice, and throws a new light upon the mystery of death. In one of the most interesting chapters in the book, Professor Caird discusses the Christian view of death, and contrasts it with the teaching of Buddha or of Socrates upon the same subject. In the Indian system the negative element wholly predominates, and the universal principle with which the individual can identify himself as the

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> P. 139.

source of his highest life is a bare fate or abstract necessity, while, though Greek thought in its highest form recognised a spiritual principle as the highest existence and the source of all life, yet the finite existence seems to lose all that belongs to it as such in its return to a life in God. But it is otherwise in the teaching of Jesus, especially when it is illumined by His sacrifice and death upon the cross. For the latter was "the first clear demonstration that the idea of a Universal God which underlies all religion is not merely the abstract idea of an infinite Being in which everything finite is merged and lost, but that it is a productive principle which can restore out of itself all, and more than all, it seems to take away."<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps rather difficult to see how this could be the case unless we supplement the narrative of the death of Christ by adding to it the miracle of the resurrection, but we fear that with regard to the latter Professor Caird would have us part with the fact, and be content with the idea which it involves, and this is still more the case with the Divinity of our Lord. In a chapter entitled "The Gospel of St. John and the Idea of a Divine Humanity," the philosophy of Green is applied to

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., p. 193.

explain the origin and development of this doctrine. St. Paul, we are told, who had not known Christ after the flesh, idealised His existence until He became for him the symbol of the principle of self-negation, or "that only in losing his life can man save it". St. John, on the contrary, endeavours to "reinststate for us the ideal image of Christ thus reached, not indeed in all the Jewish relations of its first expression, but at least in the general conditions of an actual human life." Each of these processes was necessary to the success of the Christian idea, and may be regarded as supplementary in accordance with the law with regard to the growth of the influence of the idea which is thus stated for us: "While the individual influence is very limited in its operation, and the bare universal is like a disembodied soul that has lost the power of action in the finite world, the individual who is regarded as the organ of a universal principle, the universal principle which has incarnated itself for perception or imagination in an individual life, takes hold upon man by both sides of his nature, and works with irresistible force upon all his thought and life."<sup>1</sup>

It thus happens that after death this idealising

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., p. 222.

process sets in, great men are identified with the central thought of their lives and actions, and the idea which dominated their existence is viewed as a manifestation of a Divine thought which becomes incarnate in them. In the case of the Founder of our religion the central thought of His teaching, which formed the basis of His ethical precepts, and His view of life, was the idea that the consciousness of God underlay the consciousness of the world, and still more the consciousness of self, in short the Idea of a Divine Humanity. "In fact," says Professor Caird, "it was through Jesus Christ that the capacity of men to become sons of God, which was in humanity from the first, was actualised or clearly revealed; and that, not merely in some casual voice of exalted religious feeling, or in the abstract conceptions of philosophy, but as the ruling principle of a life lived under ordinary human conditions, and, above all, in the death which was its culmination, the death of the cross to which Jesus was "lifted up that He might draw all men to Him".<sup>1</sup>

The Divinity, then, which Christ possessed was not His own peculiar attribute, but one in which humanity as a whole had a share. It is true that

<sup>1</sup> *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., pp. 231, 232.



He was the first to rise to the consciousness of the unity existing between God and humanity, but in this respect He was but the First-born of many brethren. The attempts of theology at a later time to ascribe divinity in a peculiar and unique sense to the Founder of our religion are viewed with disfavour as a return to the narrow outworn creed of Jewish Monotheism; which drew a hard and fast line of distinction between God on the one hand, and Nature and humanity on the other, and ignored altogether the great truth of the Divine immanence. This development was aided on the one hand by the controversy with Docetism and the consequent emphasis laid by the Church upon the humanity of Christ, and on the other by the influence of Neo-Platonism with its transcendent view of the Deity. Under these conditions the Church formulated a theology which carried Christianity beyond the region of reason and experience, and which found expression in the creeds.

Such is a brief *résumé* of the views of Professor Caird, and it gives rise to two obvious criticisms.

In the first place, idealism substitutes for the truth of the Christian incarnation the theory of the Divine immanence throughout creation. The only incarnation which it will admit is one which

takes place alike in the world of Nature and in humanity, and the Divine indwelling in the Person of Christ differs at most only in degree from that which is to be found in all men, or, indeed, in the whole universe. Its Christology is based upon that of the German post-Kantian philosophers, and might be expressed in the formula used by any of them; but perhaps its most accurate enunciation will be found in the dictum of Fichte, that Jesus first possessed an insight into the absolute unity of the being of man with that of God, and in revealing this insight He communicated the highest knowledge which man can possess.

In the second place it is obvious, too, that this system tends to substitute ideas for facts in accounting for the evolution of religion and the rise of Christianity. Thus, attention is no longer concentrated upon the gracious and winning influence of the sublime personal Christ, the power of which we have seen so fully acknowledged by such rationalistic writers as Renan. On the contrary, He is viewed chiefly as the incarnation of an idea which has influenced the progress of religious thought, a position which might be occupied by Buddha or Socrates or any other great religious teacher or philosopher. His teaching, no doubt, marks an important stage

in the history of the development of the religious consciousness of mankind, but we can no longer see in Him the revelation of the mind and will of the Father, or the manifestation of a Divine Person, but only the incarnation of an abstract thought about, or attribute of, God. Great persons are no longer the controlling forces of the world's history, which exhibits to us only the gradual unfolding of an idea. It will now be evident why a theology based on such a system of philosophy should find no place in it for such a miracle as that of the virgin birth. Some of the wondrous works of our Lord, and even the resurrection itself in a spiritualised form, might be reduced to the operation of natural laws in that dim borderland between the provinces of mind and matter, that little known region of mysterious psychic phenomena. But such a marvel as the miraculous conception, despite some faint analogies to be found to its occurrence in some of the lower organisms, quite transcends all our experiences of the operations of Nature, and contradicts all our notions of the process of development. Besides, even were such a miracle within the region of possibility, there is no pre-supposition in its favour to be found in a system which denies or deprives

of all significance the fact of a Divine incarnation, and sees in the Founder of our religion merely the discoverer of a hitherto imperfectly understood truth about the relation of God to the universe.

It is plain that the statement of the great Christological argument will have to be somewhat modified in face of this latest phase of philosophical thought. The great texts which assert the Deity of our Lord or His oneness with the Father may be forced into statements of the Divine immanence which found in Him its highest manifestation, and thus be deprived of all their significance. It would seem then advisable, in the first place, to direct attention rather to statements concerning the office, than those with regard to the Person, of Christ. Thus, He claims to stand in a peculiar relation to the human race as the Son of Man. He is come to found the Kingdom of God. He is the source of life to humanity. He asserts His supremacy over, and His distinction from, the other members of the human race to whom He can give rest and salvation, and as the Vice-Gerent of God He will judge mankind at the last day.

All these claims of Jesus would seem to be focussed in one centre in the assertion which He made, that He was the Messiah. That He did

make this assertion is generally admitted by rationalist writers, and is quite allowed by Professor Caird. The expectation of a Messiah was the form in which the religious consciousness of the Israelitish nation found at that time its most distinct expression, and an idea must have something to which it can attach itself. He endeavoured, however, to extract the spiritual kernel which the idea contained from the husk in which it was enclosed, and completely to transform the Jewish conception on the subject. But in doing so, He entirely disappointed all the longings and aspirations of the nation; even His disciples still clung to the expectation of a temporal deliverer, and when their hopes in this respect were dashed to the ground through His crucifixion, the result of His opposition to the Jewish Messianic ideas, they found their consolation in the belief that He would speedily return in glory to judge the world and to take vengeance upon His enemies.

There is one question, however, that is suggested by this explanation of the Messiahship of Jesus, namely, if He so disappointed the expectations of the Jews, and even the hopes of His disciples by His action in that capacity, how was it that His followers, even after what seemed the crowning

disaster of His humiliating death, became only more devoted to His service and claims? If we accept the gospel narrative, we shall find the answer to lie in two main causes, "first the impression made by the personality of Jesus, His works and His claims for Himself, before His crucifixion, and then the evidence which convinced His disciples of His resurrection".<sup>1</sup> The difficulty here presented then requires for its solution the recognition of the personality, and of the miracles, of Jesus as prime factors in the gospel history, but those are just the two factors which idealism ignores, and regards as of no account.

Moreover, while we fully admit the transformation and spiritualising of the idea of the Messiah by Jesus, we cannot agree with those who assert that He desired to deprive it of all its associations of dominion and glory. In support of this view attention has been directed to the fact that it was immediately after Peter's great confession of Jesus as the Messiah that our Lord first foretold the approach of His sufferings and death. But it should be remembered that in this case, and indeed almost invariably, He coupled with the thought of His death that of His resurrection, and an argu-

<sup>1</sup> Stanton, *The Jewish and the Christian Messiah*, p. 252.

ment has even been adduced on behalf of the latter from the repeated prophecies of it in the gospels, which seem to have been very imperfectly understood by the disciples, until light was thrown upon them by their fulfilment. And the title, too, of "Son of Man," used in the authoritative manner in which our Lord applied it to Himself, and suggesting as it did a well-known passage in the Book of Daniel, must have meant more than a mere synonym for the word "Man".

It may at first sight perhaps seem somewhat strange that rationalist writers should be so willing to admit that Jesus adopted the rôle of the Messiah ; but their reason for doing so is that one of the stock arguments of the advocates of the mythical school is drawn from this fact. For they contend that the expectations of the Jews concerning the Messiah, based upon passages in the Old Testament, had woven a tissue of legend and miracle about that personage, and that when Jesus claimed that title for Himself, He was forthwith invested with a halo of wonder, and gradually became the centre of a myth, the germ of which was to be found in the prophetical writings and sacred Scriptures of the Jewish nation. This theory was strongly advocated by Strauss, and is even more necessary



to the mythical theory now than it was in his time, since it is no longer possible to maintain that the majority of the books contained in the New Testament were written in the second century. Thus, in order to account for such a rapid transformation of the Person and history of our Lord, and the establishing, within, say, half a century after His death, of such a firm belief in a supernatural Christ, there must have existed at the time in Palestine a soil peculiarly favourable for the development of such a myth, and such, it has been asserted, did exist in the Messianic expectations of the Jews.

Even if we were disposed to grant to critics of this school all that they require in this matter, it is, to say the least, very doubtful if it would be of much avail to them. For, with all the aid which such Messianic expectations might afford them on behalf of their theory, the time between the close of our Lord's earthly life and the composition of the earlier books of the New Testament is too short to allow of such a development of myth and legend. But it has, I think, been conclusively shown that it is impossible in such a way to account for any of the miracles attributed to our Lord, except by the most forced and fanciful ana-

logies. It would be quite impossible to enter into a discussion of such an exhaustive subject, and we must confine our attention to its bearing upon one miracle only, that of the miraculous conception involved in the incarnation.

Of course, the classical quotation which might be adduced from the Old Testament as fostering the belief in the birth of the Messiah from a virgin would be Isaiah vii. 14, a passage beginning with the words: "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son". Rationalist interpreters have, however, laid great stress upon the fact that the Hebrew word translated "virgin" in our Authorised Version, need not necessarily mean more than "a young woman"; and have asserted that the prophecy found its complete fulfilment in the birth of Hezekiah, or of a son to Isaiah. They have claimed, too, that this was the generally received interpretation of the passage among the Jews themselves, and there seems good reason to believe that such was the case, and that there was no prevalent expectation among them that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. At least this would seem to be the case, judging from the dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Trypo, when he endeavours to prove to the latter that

the "prophecy had been spoken not with reference to Hezekiah as ye were taught, but to this my Christ". Not only then was there no prophecy in the Old Testament which could foster the expectation of a virgin birth for the Messiah, but there was no anticipation of such a miracle to be found in the records of the heroes of the Jewish nation, a respect in which their history was markedly distinguished from the annals of pagan races. An attempt has been made to trace such an idea in the writings of Philo, but even if the thought does underlie some of his allegorising mysticism, there are no books in the New Testament which have less resemblance to his style, or would seem to have been more wholly the pure products of Palestinian Judaism, than those gospels which contain the account of the miraculous conception.

Foiled thus in their attempts to trace the origin of the miracle to Jewish influences, rationalist critics have endeavoured to find its source in similar stories to be found in heathen mythology. But it seems very unlikely that such legends could have much affected the early Christian Church, which from the very first would appear to have occupied an isolated position, and placed itself in

decided opposition to the errors and superstitions of paganism. Moreover, the parallels which have been adduced, such as the Buddhist legend, are not by any means so close as is sometimes supposed, and really bear a stronger resemblance to the stories contained in the apocryphal gospels than to the narrative of our Lord's birth as contained in St. Matthew and St. Luke. Moreover, no part of the New Testament is more thoroughly Jewish, as we have already stated, in its whole atmosphere of thought and feeling, of hope and religious aspiration, than the above-mentioned narratives.

There remains finally the theory, which sees in those narratives merely one example of the tendency, of which we find elsewhere so many instances, to surround with legend and mystery the birth of heroes and great men, and to see in all these cases the working of one general principle, which fosters the formation of a myth and miracle under certain circumstances. That such a tendency does exist is undeniable, but may not its real explanation be found, not in the weaknesses and errors to which human nature is prone, but rather in those Divine instincts, those unconscious influences from above which mould and shape the desires of our higher nature, and make us believe

that all true greatness and nobility is from God, and that if mankind is to have a saviour, he must come to them endowed with supernatural grace and power? Here, too, then, as so often before, we may see the unconscious prophecy of heathendom, which could find its full satisfaction and complete fulfilment only in "The desire of all nations".

I have left to the last any reference to the historical evidence which we possess for the miracle in question, because, as I have said, I think, in a matter of the kind the most important element is the spirit in which we approach the consideration of such evidence, and the pre-suppositions by which our judgment is influenced, either in one direction or the other. Anything like a detailed examination of that evidence would, of course, be impossible and out of place in the present lecture; besides the matter has been fully discussed in recent treatises on the subject, notably by the Bishop of Worcester<sup>1</sup> in his well-known dissertation on *The Virgin Birth of Our Lord*. It is unnecessary to remark that the fullest account which we possess of the circumstances connected with the nativity of Jesus is that contained in the gospel of St. Luke, who is supposed by many to have derived his informa-

<sup>1</sup> Now Bishop of Birmingham.

tion from the Virgin Mary herself. In connection with the general question of the authority of his narrative I cannot but refer to the recent discussion of the question, "Was Christ born at Bethlehem?" by Professor Ramsay. The result of his investigations would seem to be the complete clearing up of the greatest difficulty in the narrative, the placing of the taxing at the time when Quirinus was Governor of Syria. A perusal of the volume will indeed tend decidedly to increase our opinion of the accuracy and fidelity of St. Luke as a historian.

The account given us by St. Matthew has been supposed to be due to St. Joseph. No doubt it is not without its difficulties, and in some respects is somewhat difficult to reconcile with that of St. Luke, while the difference in the genealogies presents to us a perhaps insoluble problem. There can, however, be no doubt that they are at all events independent witnesses, who in the main are in agreement in their attestation to the wondrous miracle of the Virgin Birth.

It will no doubt at first sight seem strange that there is no direct reference to the event elsewhere in the New Testament. St. Paul seems to have had it in his mind when he wrote the verse which I have taken for my text, and there is probably an

indirect mention of it in the Apocalypse. It would, indeed, be almost impossible to suppose that St. John was unacquainted with the circumstances attending our Lord's birth, and his not referring to them in his gospel seems to be in harmony with his general plan of omitting well-known facts, while directing attention to the doctrines which are based upon them. A striking example of his method is furnished in the case of the two sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the institution of which he does not mention, and probably takes for granted, while it can scarcely be doubted that his gospel contains indirect allusions to both those ordinances. In any case, no inference can be drawn from the silence of St. John by critics who would relegate the composition of the gospel which bears his name to a period in the second century, when there is abundant evidence that the miracle of the virgin birth had already been frequently mentioned by Christian writers, and had become enshrined in the creed of the Church.

After all I do not think that we need feel much surprise at the reticence of the New Testament writers with regard to this matter. There were reasons why it should be kept in the background,



and not thrust too prominently forward. It was one of those things that "Mary kept and pondered in her heart". During her life-time there were obvious reasons why it should not be made public, and probably at first it was only communicated to a small circle in the Church. Christianity had to make its way in the face of fierce opposition, and we can easily imagine what a handle for scandal such a story would have afforded to scornful enemies, to the Pharisees, the Jewish priests, the Roman governors. But even in our own day we might read through a volume of sermons dealing with the doctrine of the incarnation, and find little or nothing about the miracle of the virgin birth. Then, as now, no doubt the miracle was firmly believed in by many who did not think it necessary, or suitable, to give it a prominent place in their public teaching or utterances.

Whatever date, however, we may assign to the composition of the first and third gospels, they embody in this respect what was already a portion of the creed and oral teaching of the Church. This seems to be implied in St. Luke's preface, and we can scarcely otherwise account for the universality of their reception, and of the adherence to their teaching from the beginning of the

second century, except by assuming that they transmit to us the traditions of the first. Our long line of witnesses outside the canon to the miraculous manner of the birth of Christ begins with Ignatius, who wrote in the first decade of the second age, and tells us that "the virginity of Mary and her childbearing, and in like manner the death of the Lord, are three mysteries of loud proclamation which were wrought in the silence of God".<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it is worthy of note, that the belief in the virgin birth seems from the very first, to have accompanied that in the incarnation, and was only denied by the Ebionites, whose views with regard to the nature of Christ's Person we have considered in a former lecture.

It is true, no doubt, that in India we frequently hear of incarnations having taken place, but there is no mention in such cases of a miraculous birth. This fact is, however, really an argument in favour of our main contention. For the very frequency of such incarnations as occur in the religious annals of that country deprives them of their significance and value. The Divine manifestations in their creed are spread over a number of individuals, not focussed into one centre as in the

<sup>1</sup> *Epistle ad Ephesios*, c. 19.

Christian revelation. They are merely an expression of the Divine immanence, and of the belief that the great man, the hero, and the saint, kindle their courage or receive their illumination from a Divine source, and that the Divine spirit or influence is more fully present in them than in the case of their fellows. Or else they are mere shadowy phantoms, as in the Christ of Docetism. Only in the Christ of the Christian Church do we meet with an example of a true genuine incarnation, and come face to face with a Being who is at one and the same time truly human and genuinely Divine.

The Church's view of the incarnation is of course based upon, and closely connected with, the great Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, or multiplicity of hypostases in the Divine Being. This truth is, of course, a great mystery, far transcending human comprehension. This, however, is only what we might naturally expect with regard to such a subject as the nature of the Infinite Being, and while we receive it primarily on the authority of the Church, or seek its basis in the teaching of the Scripture, it is a truth most fruitful in results both theological and ethical. It saves us from a merely sentimental view of the Divinity of Christ,

and places a marked distinction in kind between Him and all others, even those whom men have regarded as Divine. I will venture, too, to say, that in our own day, while we meet with those who may acknowledge the Divinity of a non-miraculous Christ, we seldom or never find among such persons a confession of the true faith in the Trinity, since their Christ is at most the Christ of Sabellius, and not that of the Christian Church.

These thoughts bring us to our last consideration, namely, the weight of authority which can be adduced in support of the virgin birth. That fact is narrated for us in the Bible, it formed a part of the teaching of the Church from the first, and has found a place in all the creeds. If, then, we give up our belief in it, we reject the whole principle of authority in religion, and fatally impair some of the main buttresses of our faith. It is difficult, indeed, to see what weight at all we could continue to attach to the teaching of the Bible, or the declarations of the Catholic Church, if we came to the conclusion that we had been deceived by them on a matter of such vital importance, and with respect to the truth of a doctrine to which they were so fully pledged. We should be obliged to rewrite our creeds, to revise our lectionary, and

to remodel our services. There are many, no doubt, who think otherwise and would shrink from such a conclusion. They find a difficulty in believing in one unique and transcendent exercise of Divine Power, and fancy that by getting rid of it they have removed an incubus which has hung like a mill-stone round the religion of Christ, and impeded its progress. But it is impossible to regard the various articles of the Christian faith as so many detached statements having no very intimate connection with one another, and as complete in themselves; rather are they to be viewed as portions of one great whole, stones in one grand and massive temple, and the removal of one spoils the symmetry and endangers the security of the whole fabric. This is certainly the case with that article of the creed which has formed the principal subject for our consideration in the present lecture. Its removal would loosen the whole foundation of our faith, leaving as its basis, instead of the creed of the centuries, the shifting sands of contemporary thought, and substituting the pale phantom of an idealistic Christ for the rock of ages.

## APPENDIX.

THE course of English theological thought, as will be evident from the preceding lectures, has been profoundly influenced by the predominant philosophy of each epoch, or by its absence as a factor in the thought of any age. It is only natural that there should be such a close connection between the two, and it would be interesting to trace its course. All that can be attempted here is briefly to indicate some of its principal stages.

It must, however, be observed that abstruse speculation has never been congenial to the English mind. Our one influential native school of philosophy is that of Hume, which is marked by its destructive tendencies, its dislike for transcendental metaphysics, and its appeal to experience. But in the absence of a school of home-growth, devoted to *a priori* speculative thought, English philosophy has been largely influenced in that department by foreign speculative schools, by Cartesianism in the eighteenth, and by German transcendentalism in the nineteenth century.

Sir Leslie Stephen has styled the seventeenth century the golden age of English theology, and attributes its vigour at that epoch to the fact that

there was then a strict alliance between reason and religion. The difficulties of belief which were so strongly felt at a later date had not as yet arisen, and no great divergence had so far appeared between philosophy and theology. The divines of that day attempted to base their creed upon a rational foundation. Perhaps the most notable effort of the kind was that made by Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists. He argues to the existence of God from the nature of knowledge. Knowledge is not really derived from the senses, but is only possible through ideas which have their source in the eternal reason. "From whence it cometh to pass, that all minds, in the several places and ages of the world, have ideas or notions of things exactly alike, and truths indivisibly the same."

The theistic argument was, however, soon to assume a much more subtle and complex form in the hands of English philosophical divines. This was chiefly due to the first great foreign influence to which we have referred, that of Cartesianism. In its earlier forms that system had still many affinities with scholasticism, though its tone was freer and more independent, and it rejected many of the absurdities of the latter system. It still retained the notion of innate ideas, and *a priori* methods, and indeed Descartes's famous argument for the existence of God bears a strong resemblance to that of Anselm. English theologians frequently used this argument



in a modified form, but undoubtedly the most famous attempt to apply the Cartesian philosophy to the treatment of theological questions was made by Dr. Samuel Clarke in his Boyle Lectures on *The Being and Attributes of God*.

The method of proof employed in this work is a combination of the cosmological and the ontological arguments. He assumes as a necessary axiom, or innate idea, the existence of an eternal self-existent being, for the only alternative would be the self-contradictory notion of an infinite series of dependent causes. There is, indeed, much to be said in favour of this assumption on the part of Clarke, for though it may be possible from the merely logical standpoint to defend the latter view, it has never yet been seriously maintained by any school of thought that it forms a possible hypothesis for the origin and constitution of the universe. Some *ultima ratio*, be it mind or force or matter, has always been assumed as containing within itself the final explanation of the known Cosmos.

From the question of the Being of God Clarke proceeds to the consideration of His attributes, and endeavours to demonstrate the omnipresence, the omnipotence, the omniscience, and the infinite wisdom and beneficence of the Creator. No doubt, at times his argument is of an abstract and recondite nature, and not calculated to appeal to the general reader. As an example we may cite his proof of the Divine

attribute of knowledge, which runs as follows: "In order to prove plainly and intelligibly that God is a Being which must of necessity be endued with perfect knowledge, 'tis to be observed that knowledge is a perfection, without which the foregoing attributes are no perfections at all, and without which those which follow can have no foundation. When there is no knowledge, Eternity and Immensity are as nothing, and Justice, Goodness, Mercy and Wisdom, can have no place. The idea of eternity and omnipresence, devoid of knowledge, is as the notion of darkness compared with that of light. 'Tis as a notion of the world without the sun to illuminate it; 'tis as the notion of inanimate matter (which is the atheist's supreme cause) compared with that of light and spirit. And as for the following attributes of Justice, Goodness, Mercy and Wisdom, 'tis evident without knowledge there could not possibly be such things as these at all."<sup>1</sup>

The argument as thus presented may fail to carry the conviction of a demonstration, yet it is difficult to see how its force can be evaded, and certainly a denial of such attributes as infinity, and perfection, to the self-existent first cause would lead us into hopeless contradictions and absurdities. We may remark that Clarke consistently carries his *a priori* methods of investigation into the sphere of morals in which he was a representative leader of the intuitive school, and

<sup>1</sup> Sermon xi.

into that of revealed religion. Thus he endeavours to deduce the necessity, or, at all events, the probability of a revelation from a consideration of the Divine attributes. The following passage will serve as an illustration of his method of reasoning:—

“ Since therefore there was plainly and confessedly wanting a Divine revelation to relieve the Necessities of Men in their Natural State ; and since no Man can presume to say that 'tis inconsistent with any of the Attributes of God, or unbecoming the Wisdom of the Creator of all Things to supply that want ; . . . Nay, since, on the contrary, it seems more suitable to our natural Notions of the Goodness and Mercy of God, to suppose that He should do all this than not, it follows undeniably, that it was most reasonable and agreeable to the Dictates of Nature, to expect or hope for such a Divine Revelation. . . . From what has been said upon this Head, it appears plainly that 'tis agreeable to the natural Hopes and Expectations of Men, that is of Right Reason duly improved, to suppose God making some particular revelation of His Will to Mankind, which may supply the undeniable Defects of the Light of Nature. And, at the same Time, 'tis evident that such a Thing is by no Means unworthy of the Divine Wisdom, or inconsistent with any of the Attributes of God ; but rather, on the contrary, most suitable to them. Consequently, considering the manifold Wants and Necessities of Men, and the abundant Goodness and Mercy of God, there is great

ground from Right Reason, and the Light of Nature, to believe that God would not always leave Men wholly destitute of so needful an assistance, but would at some Time or other actually afford it them."<sup>1</sup>

It was not long, however, before the Cartesian system and a *priori* methods of thought, found themselves exposed to the attack of a critical movement in philosophy, at the head of which stands the name of Locke.

Locke, as we all know, was the sworn foe of the Cartesian doctrine of innate ideas, and the great champion of a philosophy of experience. All knowledge, according to him, was derived from our sensations, or from our reflection upon those sensations. In applying this view to the questions of theology, and of a Divine revelation, it was necessary to look upon that revelation as something given to us wholly from without, as the notion of a *priori* ideas in the mind, to which it might specially appeal, had been summarily dismissed. That revelation was, in itself, a historical fact, and must be judged of, like any other fact of the kind, by the logical reason alone. Thus Locke asserts: "Whatever God hath revealed is certainly true; no doubt can be made of it. This is the proper object of Faith; but whether it be a Divine revelation or no, reason must judge." And again, "How a man may know whether he be a lover of truth for truth's sake is worth inquiry; and I think there is this one unerring mark of it, *viz.*, the not entertaining any proposition with

<sup>1</sup> *Evidences.*

greater assurance than the proofs it is built upon will warrant. Whoever goes beyond this measure of assent, it is plain, receives not truth in the love of it; loves not truth for truth's sake, but for some other by-end."

In accordance with these sentiments Locke named the work which he published on behalf of revealed religion, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and the title may be taken as an index to the theology of the following age. In his *Essay on the Human Understanding*, too, while not altogether ignoring the other theistic arguments, he lays most stress on the cosmological proof, the argument from experience. It was, however, impossible to apply the principles of his philosophy consistently and rigidly in all cases, and with regard to the three great certainties of knowledge, our own existence, the existence of God, and the existence of matter, Locke tacitly assumes the *a priori* existence of necessary and universal principles, an assumption strangely at variance with the principles of the experience school of philosophy.

The criticisms of Locke were further developed in some directions by Bishop Berkeley, the second name in the great trio of English metaphysicians. Assuredly no stranger fate has ever befallen any philosopher than Berkeley. The founder of a lofty system of spiritual philosophy, and the life-long enemy of materialism, the immediate result of his influence was the thorough-going scepticism of Hume, and the consequent total paralysis of thought, both in the regions of philosophy

and theology. Only in our own day, and chiefly through the labours of Professor Fraser, has his true position and the nature of his thought come to be more justly appreciated. It is, of course, with this positive side of Berkeley's philosophy that we are mainly concerned, and especially with the new form of the theistic argument which may be deduced from his system of idealism.

Berkeley's criticisms were chiefly directed against the then prevalent conception of the nature of substance. Locke, while admitting the subjective nature of what he termed the secondary qualities of matter, such as colour and smell, held in common with the Cartesians, that its primary qualities, such as extension and solidity, had an objective existence in themselves, apart from any knowing mind or thinking subject. There was, they held, some material substratum in which such qualities inhered, and which gave to them, *per se*, a real existence. It is true that the thing in itself was only known to us through the intermediary of ideas, through whose agency it was presented to our minds, and might or might not resemble the ideas by which it was thus presented to us. This doctrine of representative perception, as it was called, thus limited our knowledge, and cut us off from all contact with reality. But, further, the doctrine of a material substance seems even at that time to have been a fruitful source of irreligion and atheism. It would indeed surprise some of us to find how general such views seem to have been in Berkeley's day. No doubt

they found advocates among those who styled themselves the followers of Hobbes and Spinoza, though probably their opinions would have been repudiated by those great thinkers. The great object, then, of Berkeley's philosophy was to get rid of this abstract entity called substance, for the existence of which he perceived no just warrant, and to reduce all existence to the two categories of spirits or self-conscious beings, and the sense-phenomena or ideas, which exist only for and in relation to spirits. But he was here met by a difficulty. If the objects of sense only exist in relation to and when perceived by some spirit, what becomes of their permanence, and what guarantee have we of their reality? If any external object, say the furniture of a room, exists only as an object of perception, what becomes of it in those intervals when it is not such an object? Are we to suppose that in those intervals it ceases to exist, and that it issues forth as a fresh creation at the end of such periods? There is indeed only one alternative to such an extravagant hypothesis. If the objects of the external world are to have a real permanent existence, such an existence must depend upon the Eternal Spirit, to whom the whole cosmos is related and from it derives its unity and stability.

It is not difficult for us to see how, from these considerations, a new form of the cosmological and ontological arguments may easily be deduced by theists. If ideas only exist in relation to spirits, there must be



some such spirit to whom the whole universe can be related, as an object to a subject. In fact the whole external world of sense-phenomena is presented to us by the Berkeleian idealism as one grand Divine thought or series of Divine ideas.

This form of the theistic argument is indeed rather implied and suggested than formally stated in the writings of Berkeley. It meets a difficulty with reference to the principle of causation, which appears in the manner in which that argument was presented by Clarke and his school, a difficulty which was soon to be remorselessly displayed by Hume and afterwards by Kant. Berkeley was, however, quite willing to admit the category of causality into his system. Such an originaive power belongs only to spirits, the causality which we attribute to the phenomena of sense at most only possesses that attribute in a dependent sense. The ultimate unsubstantiality of matter, indeed, implies its ultimate impotence, and this fact is one of the central points of Berkeley's philosophy, and from it Berkeley reasons back to the existence of an infinite mind as the originating cause of all things. His argument is thus clearly and succinctly summed up by Dr. Martineau: "The reasoning of the former (Berkeley) is well known. The states of feeling and idea which form the thread of my experience rise up within me unbidden, and are no work of mine. They extort from me the question, 'Whence are they?' The first answer, on which my instinct of causality

hastily seizes, says, ' They are delivered to you by the perceptible objects which occupy and animate the space around you, and to which is entrusted the function of educating your senses, and opening your understanding to the laws and constitution of the world '. These educating media, however, have no more put themselves there, and determined what they shall do to me when entering on their work, than have my sensible impressions turned up by self-origination. They too demand their causality; and can have it only in the infinite Mind which is the Cause of causes and the Fount of thought. But if so, what does His agency gain by devolution on a material intermediary system which does nothing but transmit it, and serves no purpose unless it be to hide its author from unawakened eyes? Remove out of the way this fictitious delegation of power, and nothing is lost. All finite minds are but left alone with the Infinite, to be taught immediately by His method, disciplined by His laws, and drawn into communion with His spirit. The inference therefore is direct, that ' there is an Omnipresent Eternal Mind, which knows and comprehends all things, and exhibits them to our view in such a manner, and according to such rules as He Himself hath ordained, and are by us termed laws of nature '." <sup>1</sup>

We can now understand the great aim of Berkeley's philosophy. It was an endeavour to substitute God for the inert matter of Locke's philosophy. Through

<sup>1</sup> *Study of Religion*, vol. i., p. 211.

the presence of reason immanent and active in the universe, that universe has become intelligible to us, as the medium through which that reason speaks to us. For the world of sense-phenomena is but a visual language expressing the mind and will of God, and is the means whereby He develops our personality and educates our nature.

As I have, however, already stated, Berkeley's influence as a spiritual thinker was latent in the period which immediately followed his death. In his most complete and systematic work, the *Principles of Human Knowledge*, he still moves within the narrow limits of the sense philosophy, and no doubt those limits restrained and cramped the breadth and freedom of his speculations. He does not seem ever to have formally renounced the tenets of that school, but in his latest work, the *Siris*, he uses language completely at variance with its fundamental principles. Thus he says: "We know a thing when we understand it; and we understand it when we can interpret or tell what it signifies. Strictly the sense knows nothing."<sup>1</sup> And again: "Sense and experience acquaint us with the course and analogy of appearance or natural effects. Thought, Reason, Intellect introduce us into the knowledge of their causes."<sup>2</sup> And once more: "As understanding perceiveth not, that is, doth not hear, or see, or feel, so sense knoweth not: and although the mind may use both sense and fancy, as means whereby to

<sup>1</sup> Section 253.

<sup>2</sup> Section 264.

arrive at knowledge, yet sense or soul, so far forth as sensitive, knoweth nothing." <sup>1</sup>

Indeed, in many respects the *Siris* marks an advance in Berkeley's later thought. It is pervaded throughout by a Platonic vein of thought. Thus the term "idea" is no longer used as in the *Principles of Human Knowledge* in reference to objects of sense, but signifies an intellectual conception. As a whole, throughout this treatise Berkeley seems to be following in the footsteps of the earlier English Platonists, such as Cudworth, by whom, no doubt, he was greatly influenced, and whose name he frequently introduces. He displays in it, too, a broad and tolerant spirit and "welcomes the acknowledgment of God in any intellectual form of faith that consists with the supremacy of Active Reason in the universe". <sup>2</sup>

It is no doubt a matter for regret that no one arose to follow in the footsteps of Berkeley, but the time was not yet ripe for such a development of his philosophy, and the whole thought of the age ran counter to such speculations. In any case the *Siris* was too unsystematic, and the ideas contained in it too nebulous, and undeveloped, to be made the basis of a school of exact philosophic thought. Indeed, the treatise resembles a number of thoughts strung together in a loose and disjointed way, only bound one to another by the great

<sup>1</sup> Section 305.

<sup>2</sup> Fraser's "Introduction to the *Siris*," in his *Selections from Berkeley*, p. 335.

central idea of the supremacy of Reason as the originating source, and pervading principle of the universe. This one main thesis is supported by the consent of the great thinkers of the ancient world, who are shown to be in real agreement with regard to this question, however they may differ in their methods of expressing their convictions. And the work concludes with a noble utterance, in which the pursuit of truth is placed before us as a means whereby advance may be made in real knowledge, and light thrown upon the mysteries and limitations of our mortal state.

The negative side of Berkeley's philosophy was further developed, while his positive conclusions were rudely assailed, by David Hume, the greatest and most influential of English metaphysicians. While the criticism of Locke seized hold of the doctrine of innate ideas, and that of Berkeley the notion of a material substance, Hume's attack was directed mainly against the axiom of causation. All that experience or induction can warrant us in inferring from any series of events is the fact of an accustomed sequence or succession among them, and the notion of causality may be reduced to that of a constant prior, and a constant posterior, presented to us in an unbroken time series. And, indeed, such a theory is the logical outcome of the sense philosophy, for sensation alone presents us with no picture or idea of causality upon which our imagination can lay hold.

Hume criticises the theory of Locke, and asks, "by

what argument can it be proved that the perceptions of the mind must be caused by external objects entirely different from them " and, as for such a hypothesis as that of Berkeley, he says: "it is too bold ever to carry conviction with it to a man sufficiently apprised of the weakness of human reason. Though the chain of arguments which conduct to it were ever so logical, there must arise a strong suspicion, if not an absolute assurance, that it has carried us quite beyond the reach of our faculties, when it leads to conclusions so extraordinary and so remote from common life and experience. We have got into fairyland long ere we have reached the last steps of our theory, and there we have no reason to trust our common methods of argument. . . . Our line is too short to fathom such immense abysses."<sup>1</sup>

But it was not merely the notion of causality that was attacked by Hume; he further denies the existence of an Ego or permanent self, and resolves all our experience into a series of disconnected impressions. "There are," he says, "some philosophers who imagine we are every moment conscious of what we call our Self; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity. . . . Unluckily, all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them. . . . For my part, when I enter most intimately

<sup>1</sup> *Inquiry*, section 7.

into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other—of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure (*i.e.*, on something merely phenomenal or transitory). I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the (transitory) perception. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long am I insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death, and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate, after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated; nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect nonentity.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus the immediate result of the critical movement and of the sense philosophy was a doctrine of philosophic nescience, which issued in a complete scepticism. An attempt was, however, soon made to construct a positive system on the basis of pure phenomenalism, with the aid of the associationist doctrines of Hartley. But it was not alone in the question of perception or experience that Hume was the foe of all *a priori* notions; he carried his campaign too into the territory of ethics and moral philosophy, and may be regarded as one of the founders of the utilitarian school. He can thus reckon among his descendants Bentham and Austen, as well as Brown and the Mills.

I have already referred to the disastrous effect which

<sup>1</sup> Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*, book i., pt. iv., sect. 6.



the sceptical philosophy, and the consequent paralysis of thought, had upon English theology. In the earlier part of the eighteenth century theologians like Clarke could produce great works in speculative divinity, or a Berkeley could be the author of a splendid system of spiritual philosophy; but in the age which followed the publication of Hume's treatises all was changed. Paley, the one great theologian of that epoch, was a disciple of the school of the sense philosophy, a Utilitarian, if not a Hedonist, in his ethics, while in his work on *Natural Theology* he never once even refers to the ontological argument, and rests his case wholly upon the proof from design. As we have seen in the question of a revelation, too, external evidences assumed the foremost place, and divines displayed their talents, and exhausted their strength, in endeavouring to answer the cavils of Hume upon that subject.

The controversy, of course, turned mainly upon the question of the credibility of miracles, but it involved the larger one of their possibility. And here, too, we may notice the results of the deistic conceptions which were then paramount. Anxious above all things to give law the first place as the dominant principle in a universe, where, in the absence of its personal ruler, it held a deputed sway, and fearing lest a miracle should seem a violation or infringement of the Divine order of the universe, theologians defined a miracle as the suspension of a lower, in obedience to the presence and operation of a higher law of Nature. The defini-

tion was no doubt a serviceable one in answering the assaults of the followers of Spinoza, but in our own day such a conception of a miracle is gradually giving way before the less mechanical notion, that we see in the supernatural, not so much the manifestation of a higher law, as the revelation of a higher form of life.

It was not to be expected that such thorough-going scepticism as that of Hume should remain in undisputed possession of the field, and an endeavour was made ere long to vindicate the customary beliefs, and universal faith of mankind, which had received so rude a shock. The author of the attempt was Thomas Reid, who may be regarded as the founder of the Scottish school of metaphysicians. Of the value of Reid's own contribution to philosophy very different estimates have been taken. Its principal value would seem to consist chiefly in the fact, that he clearly perceived that the scepticism of Hume was the only logical result of the experience philosophy, or of the doctrine that all or almost all our knowledge of objects was derived from sensation alone. Reid distinguishes between a mere sensation and the perception of an object; the latter involves in addition to the former what he terms "Natural Judgments". Foremost among these is that of the existence of a permanent subject of thought, present in every thought or sensation, and it is accompanied by the belief in the existence of a real world to which we are related. Another of our judgments affirms the validity of the idea of

causation. A recent critic has put forward as the central points in Reid's philosophy: "(1) The reassertion of the essential difference between the primary and the secondary qualities, or, in other words, the proclamation of a generic distinction between extension, as a percept, and any feeling or series of feelings as such; and (2) the assertion that the unit of knowledge is an act of judgment".<sup>1</sup>

Reid may thus seem to have anticipated in some respects the doctrines of Kant, though he lacked the clearness of thought and the constructive ability of the great German philosopher. He was himself at one time a disciple of Berkeley, by whom he was influenced in his psychological studies, and was a diligent student of the writings of Butler. And this leads me to say a few words about the general attitude of these thinkers towards the great problems of existence, and the mysteries of the universe. In contrast, then, to what we may style agnostic or gnostic systems of philosophy, about which we will have to say a few words presently, they may be said to have inculcated a philosophy of faith. They were painfully conscious of the limited extent of our knowledge, of the many difficulties by which all higher speculation was beset, and recognised in our ignorance one of the trials to which our faith is subject. Yet they taught no doctrine of nescience or philosophy of despair; but Butler, who insists so much upon our ignorance, recognised in the voice of con-

<sup>1</sup> Seth, *Scottish Philosophy*, p. 96.

science the Divine mentor ; and the test of our faith, which constituted our probation, consisted in our obedience to its voice ; while Berkeley perceived in the appointed course of Nature a means for our education in the Divine purpose and will. Kant, too, taught a philosophy of faith, when he found a refuge from intellectual subtleties and perplexities, in yielding his allegiance to the commands of the practical reason. Of Reid and his followers we may say the same. They maintain the veracity of the natural judgments of humanity, and of the principles latent in human experience, not by means of any completed system of philosophy, or through any claim to the possession of absolute knowledge, but through an act of faith. They were persuaded that, in spite of all difficulties, and in the midst of much which they were unable to explain, our knowledge was not wholly an illusion, or the universe a deceit. Such a philosophy has never wanted its exponents in England, and seems peculiarly congenial to our country. It is such a faith that breathes through the pages of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, and has enshrined that poem in the heart of the nation :—

We have but faith ; we cannot know ;  
 For knowledge is of things we see ;  
 And yet we trust it comes from thee,  
 A beam in darkness : let it grow.

I have described the philosophy of Kant as one of which the dominant note was faith. This aspect of

his thought has been touched upon by Mr. Wilfrid Ward, who unites his name with those of Newman and Tennyson as "Witnesses to the unseen," and supports his contention by the following quotation: "Belief in God and in another world," wrote Kant, "is so interwoven with my moral nature, that the former can no more vanish than the latter can be torn from me. The only point to be remarked here is that this act of faith of the intellect assumes the existence of moral dispositions. If we leave them aside and assume a mind quite indifferent to moral laws, the inquiry started by reason becomes merely a subject for speculation . . . supported by strong arguments from analogy, but not by such as are competent to overcome persistent scepticism."

And, undoubtedly, the positive spiritual side of Kant's teaching exercised a great influence upon English thought, which it permeated chiefly through the influence of Coleridge. It freed men from the trammels of the sense philosophy, increased the domain of reason, and enlarged their spiritual horizon. And men who had come under his influence, experienced his difficulties, and found deliverance in his teaching, were naturally the best equipped to meet the intellectual perplexities of their fellows, and to help them in the hour of their need. Thus, at all events indirectly, the philosophy of Kant was a powerful factor in that great spiritual awakening, and in the marked revival of interest in theological studies, which took place in

England in the earlier part of the last century, and of which a striking feature was a rejection of the claims of the mere understanding, and the assertion of the supremacy of the practical reason. And this assertion was made in virtue of, and partook of the nature of, an act of faith.

There are, however, two other very different schools of philosophy in our own day, which profess to be based upon developments of Kant's doctrines, and which have profoundly affected the thought of our age. The first of these is that modern form of agnosticism which rests upon the relativity of knowledge. Kant, and in this respect he differed from Reid, never questioned the doctrine of the idealists, that we can know only our own ideas, while it was scarcely possible, according to his system, which reduced space to a mental concept, and gave so much prominence to subjective forms of thought, that the images conveyed to our minds by those ideas should resemble the world of real existences. Thus Kant drew a sharp line of distinction between the Phenomena, or the world of outward objects as it appeared to our minds, and that world as it existed in itself. The Phenomena alone were objects of knowledge, but behind them lay the unknown reality which they represented, and from access to which we were entirely cut off. The world in Kant's philosophy has an objective existence, because it is related to fixed rational elements in the subject that it is associated with, but it is not a whit more

real than the world of Hume. The logical outcome of such a system is phenomenalism or agnosticism.

This side of Kant's philosophy, as we saw in one of our lectures, was developed by Sir William Hamilton and Dean Mansel; but in the case of those thinkers their philosophic scepticism was not very consistently united with a theological faith. A more decidedly agnostic position was, however, taken up by Herbert Spencer, who unflinchingly pursued the same line of thought to its logical conclusion. We can, he asserts, know nothing of God, for He is the Absolute behind all phenomena, and we can know nothing but the relative. We cannot bring His Being under any of the categories of existence with which we are familiar, such as causality, for He would then stand in relation to an effect, and would cease to be "Absolute" or "Infinite".

Spencer, however, admitted that the Absolute had a real existence as the correlative of the phenomenal world, though this admission seems to destroy the whole force of his argument. But he went even farther than this. He declared that it is "absolutely certain" that we are in "the presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed". And this Unknowable Energy is, he maintains, the true object of a rational religion. Many, however, who have followed him so far in his philosophy, have declined to take this last step, and have preferred to find their object of religion in the known world of natural phenomena, and especially in its highest manifesta-



tion—humanity. This is notably the case with the English Positivists, who have found an eloquent exponent of their views in Mr. Frederic Harrison. In a famous controversy<sup>1</sup> many years ago between the two great leaders of these schools of thought, both parties admitted that religion was a necessity, that neither the “Unknown” or “Humanity” were adequate objects of worship, while it was evident that each contributed something towards the satisfaction of the religious consciousness which was wanting in the other. What was required for its full satisfaction was a religion which would present to it the “Unknown” as revealed and made manifest in the Known, especially in humanity, and appeal to the sentiments of mystery and awe on the one hand, and on the other to those of enthusiasm and love. Such a religion is to be found in the Christian revelation and in it alone. For it brings before us, as the object of our reverence and love, a God who has revealed Himself in Nature and in History, but above all in humanity. The incarnation, then, as the central doctrine of our faith, seems to combine in itself the claims of rival systems of thought, as in former instances, and may be regarded as a grand fact which has acted as a unifying principle, satisfying every need which could be met by the religion of humanity, and answering one which it fails to supply, the aspiration after the “Infinite”.

In more recent times a new school of thought has

<sup>1</sup> In the *Nineteenth Century* for 1884.

arisen in England, which is styled the "Neo-Kantian" and which has given a new meaning to one aspect of Kant's philosophy. He had conclusively shown that mere sensation could not in itself be a source of knowledge, for the objects of sensation must first be submitted to the judgment of the categories of the understanding, before they could become objects for consciousness. At the root, however, of his whole system, and forming a basis for those categories, lay the idea of a permanent subject, a self, which gave a unity to the various objects of thought, and through which alone knowledge was possible, and he named it the synthetic unity of apperception, or the transcendental unity of self-consciousness. He also called it the transcendental self, in order to distinguish it from the empirical self, which a man may look back upon as the succession of his own states and feelings, and as containing the record of his experience. The transcendental self, on the contrary, may be described as "static," "permanent," "unchangeable," "identical".

This idea of the transcendental self as a principle of knowledge and as the unity of consciousness was largely made use of by the Neo-Kantians, and in the hands of Green it became a powerful instrument in his criticism upon the empiricism of Hume. But Green was not content to treat the transcendental Ego as only a principle of knowledge; he endeavoured by its aid to pass from epistemology to ontology, and to construct an absolute philosophy of existence. He

defined it as a spiritual principle and seemed to think that this timeless self, whose existence and functions were so similar in the case of each individual, was nothing else than the "Eternal Consciousness" which reproduced itself in the case of each human soul. Such a theory seemed to satisfy the desire of the idealist for a unity which should embrace within it the whole universe, and be made a philosophical basis on which to construct a system of ethics.

There is, no doubt, at first sight much that is fascinating in all this. "It might appear to many that we had here a new and better Berkeleyanism, for God in this system was not an unknown spirit, hidden, as it were, behind the screen of phenomena; God was not far from any one of us, nay, He was within us, He was in a sense our very self."<sup>1</sup> But on a further examination it will appear to us in a very different light. If empiricism fails to explain our apprehension of the external world, idealism cannot explain our knowledge of persons. By separating the transcendental from the empirical self, and leaving only the latter to the individual, it deprives us of all true personality, while it seriously impairs our notion of that term as applied to God Himself. It speaks in most uncertain accents about personal immortality, the great hope of mankind, while its arrogant claim of gnosticism, as implied in its boast to be an absolute philosophy, is refuted by the fact that it can give no

<sup>1</sup> Seth, *Hegelianism and Personality*, p. 60.

adequate account of the sin and sorrow of the world, no satisfactory explanation of the dark mysteries of human existence. The reduction, too, of all existence to that of a single self destroys the notion of self-sacrifice and really removes the true foundations of morals.

In spite, however, of all these defects, idealism has done a noble service in its repeated assertion of the truth that all ethics must ultimately rest on a transcendent basis, and on a Divine centre of unity for mankind. It is not so easy to point out exactly the nature of this basis, but we certainly need not adopt the extravagant hypothesis of the Neo-Kantians with regard to the unity of all persons in a single self. Perhaps the doctrine of the Divine immanence, and the indwelling of the Logos in humanity, may after all be found sufficient for the purpose, or else we must seek it in some such extension of the doctrine of Berkeley as that advocated by Bishop Darcy,<sup>1</sup> who thus sums up his argument: "God is then personal, but He is also more than personal; for He transcends and unites all mere persons in His transcendent unity. As Person, He gives possibility to Nature; as more than person, He gives possibility to the multitude of spirits. It may be said of Him, that 'in Him we live, and move, and have our being,' that He is 'the source,' on the one hand, of all subjects, and, on the other hand, of all objects. But such expressions correspond

<sup>1</sup> *Short Study of Ethics*, p. 48.

to a reality which transcends thought. They are phrases 'thrown out' at a truth too great for human intelligence. As to the mode of the union of all spirits in God we are ignorant, and must remain ignorant as long as our faculties are what they are. The principle which makes the union possible is inscrutable, but the fact of the union must be assumed as the basis of all coherence, speculative and practical."











